WHO GOES THERE!

Robert W. Chambers

Genevieve Fanning

12/26/19

"Who goes there!"

WHO GOES THERE!

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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To

J. HAMBLEN SEARS

Joseph! I've known you now for many years;
You are the Hero of this pretty story;
In him your every virtue reappears
Lighting his way along the road to glory.

All you possess adorns this Hero gay,
Your fatal beauty, curly hair, and so forth;
Like you he's always ready, night or day,
To pack his doggy clothes and ties and go forth.

No winsome maid beneath a summer sky,
Innured to prudence, modesty, and duty
Would dare demur or hesitate to fly
With such a manly specimen of beauty.

Accept, my friend, this tribute to your worth
As publisher, explorer, lover, fighter,
For men like you were destined from their birth
To make a millionaire of any writer.

R. W. C.

WHO GOES THERE!

Not with indifferent or with flippant hand
I draw the curtain's corner to disclose
A rose, a leaf, a path through this sad land
Untrampled yet by foes.

Out of the Past—the Heart's last Hermitage—
A wistful Phantom glides to me again
Here where I pace that solitary cage
They call, The World of Men.
In vain she mirrors me the Golden Age;
Vain is her Voice of Spring in wood and glen;
The winter sunlight falls across my page
Gilding a broken pen.

Withered the magic gardens which were mine;
Eden, in embers, blackens in the sun;
Rooting amid crushed roses the Wild Swine
Still root, and spare not one.

Village and spire and scented forest path,
Pastures and brooks, meadows and hills and fens
Heard not the secret whispering in Gath
There where the Gray Boar dens,
Till burst his dreadful clamour on the Rhine
And all the World shrank deafened by the roar
Aghast before the out-rush of Wild Swine
Led by the great Gray Boar.

Fallen the cloud-capped castles which were mine;
Cities in ashes whiten in the sun;
Rending the ruined shrines, the Rhenish Swine
Still rend, and spare not one.

PREFACE

The Crown Prince is partly right; the majority in the world is against him and what he stands for; but not against Germany and the Germans.

He professes surprise at the attitude of the United States. That attitude is the natural result of various causes among which are the following:

Distrust of any aggressor by a nation inclined toward peace.

Disgust at the "scrap of paper" episode.

Resentment at the invasion of Belgium.

Contempt for the Imperial Government which is industriously screwing the last penny of "indemnity" out of a ruined nation, which the people of the United States are taxing their private means to keep from starvation.

Further back there are other reasons.

For thirty years the press of Germany has seldom missed an opportunity to express its contempt for Americans. Any American who has ever lived in Germany or who has read German newspapers during the last thirty years is aware of the tone of the German press concerning America and Americans. No innuendoes have been too vulgar, no sneers too brutal for the editors of these papers, and, presumably for the readers.

Also Americans do not forget the attitude of the Imperial Government during the Spanish war. The bad manners of a German Admiral are bearing fruit.

Imperialism we Americans do not understand, but it need not make us unfriendly to empires.

But we do understand when manners are bad, or when a military caste, which maintains its traditions of personal honour by violence, becomes arrogant to the point of brutality.

A false notion of personal honour is alone enough to prevent a sympathetic understanding between two peoples.

America is not an enemy to Germany, only is it inexorably opposed to any Government which breaks faith; and which enthrones above all other gods the god of violence.

For the German soldiers who are dying in this Hohenzollern-Hapsburg war we have only sympathy and pity. We know they are as brave as any soldiers; that cruelty in the German Army is in no greater proportion than it is in any army.

But also we know that the cause of Imperial Germany is wrong; her civilization is founded on propositions impossible for any American to accept; her aims, ambitions, and ideals antagonistic to the progress to communal and individual liberty as we understand the terms. And that settles the matter for us.

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WHO GOES THERE!

CHAPTER I

IN THE MIST

THEY had selected for their business the outer face of an old garden wall. There were red tiles on the coping; dusty roadside vines half covered the base. Where plaster had peeled off a few weather-beaten bricks showed. Bees hummed in the trampled herbage.

Against this wall they backed the first six men. One, a mere boy, was crying, wiping his frightened eyes on his shirt-sleeve.

The dry crash of the volley ended the matter; all the men against the wall collapsed. Presently one of them, the boy who had been crying, moved his arm in the grass. A rifle spoke instantly, and he moved no more.

There came a low-spoken word of command, the firing squad shouldered rifles, wheeled, and moved off; and out of the sea-grey masses of infantry another squad of execution came marching up, smartly.

A dozen men, some in sabots, trousers, and dirty collarless shirts, some in well-cut business suits and straw hats, and all with their wrists tied behind them, stood silently awaiting their turns. One among them, a young

man wearing a golf-cap, knickerbockers, heather-spats, and an absolutely colourless face, stood staring at the tumbled heaps of clothing along the foot of the wall as though stupified.

Six peasants went first; the men more smartly attired were to wait a little longer it appeared.

The emotionless and methodical preparations, the brisk precision of the operation, the cheerful celerity of the firing squad made it the more terrifying, stunning the victims to immobility.

The young man in the golf-cap and knickerbockers clenched his tied hands. Not an atom of colour remained in cheeks or lips, and he stood with face averted while the squad of execution was busy with its business.

There seemed to be some slight disorder along the wall—a defiant voice was raised hoarsely cursing all Germans; another, thin and hysterical, cheered for Belgium and the young King. Also this firing squad must have aimed badly, for bayonet and rifle-butt were used afterward and some delay occurred; and an officer, revolver swinging, prowled along the foot of the wall, kicking inquiringly at the dead heaps of heavy flesh that had collapsed there.

Houses lining the single village street began to leak smoke; smoke writhed and curled behind closed window-panes. Here and there a mounted Uhlan forced his big horse up on the sidewalk and drove his lance butt through the window glass.

Already the street was swimming in thin strata of smoke; the sea-grey uniforms of the German infantry

seemed part of the haze; only the faces of the soldiery were visible—faces without bodies, thousands of flat, detached faces, thousands of little pig eyes set in a blank and foggy void. And over everything in the close, heavy air brooded the sour stench of a sweat-soaked, unwashed army.

A third squad of execution came swinging up, apparently out of nowhere, their heavy half-boots clumping in unison on the stony street.

The young man in the golf-cap and knickerbockers heard them coming and bit his bloodless lip.

After a moment the rhythm of the heavy boots ceased. The street became very silent, save where window glass continually fell tinkling to the sidewalk and the feathery whisper of flames became more audible from within the row of empty houses.

The young man lifted his eyes to the sombre and sunless sky. High up there above the mist and heavy bands of smoke he saw the feathery tops of tall trees, motionless.

Presently through the silence came the clatter of hoofs; Uhlans cantered past, pennons whipping from lance heads; then a soft two-toned bugle-call announced an automobile; and presently it loomed up, huge, through the parted ranks of the infantry, a great grey, low-purring bulk, slowing, halting, still purring.

A grey-clad general officer sat in the tonneau, a grey-uniformed hussar was seated beside the grey-liveried chauffeur.

As the car stopped several officers were already beside the running-board, halted stiffly at attention. The general officer, his cigar between his gloved fingers, leaned over the edge of the tonneau and said something in a very quiet voice.

Instantly a slim, stiff infantry captain saluted, wheeled sharply, and walked straight to the little file of prisoners who stood with their wrists tied behind their backs, looking vacantly at the automobile.

"Which is the prisoner-hostage who says he is American?" he snapped out in his nasal Prussian voice.

The young man who wore a golf-cap took a short step forward, hesitated.

"You?"

"Yes."

"Fall in again!"

The officer nodded to a sergeant of infantry, and a squad of men shoved the prisoners into single file, facing not the fatal wall, but westward, along the street.

"March!" said somebody. And the next moment again: "Halt!" rang out with the snapping brevity of a cracked whip. The general officer leaned from the grey tonneau and looked steadily along the file of hostages until his glance fell upon the young man in the golf-cap.

"What is your name?" he asked quietly in English.

"My name is Guild."

"The rest?"

"Kervyn Guild."

"You say you are American?"

"Yes."

The general officer looked at him for a moment longer, then said something to the hussar aide-de-camp.

The aid threw open the car door and jumped out. A lieutenant took command of the escort. The hussar whispered instructions, turned and came to attention beside the running-board, then, at a nod from the general officer, jumped up beside the chauffeur. There came the soft-toned, mellow warning of the bugle; the grey machine glided off into the mist; the prisoners and escort followed it, marching briskly.

As they passed the end of the street two houses on their right suddenly roared up in one vast, smoke-shot tower of flame, and a brassy glare lighted up the mist around them.

Somewhere near by a woman began to scream; farther down the street, more windows and doors were being beaten in. From farther away, still, came the strains of military music, resonant, full, magnificent. A detail passed with spades to bury the dead who lay under the wall. All was order, precision, and cheerful despatch. The infantry column, along the halted flanks of which the prisoners were now being marched, came to attention. Company after company marked time, heavily; shouldered rifles. Uhlans in file came spurring through the centre of the street; a cyclist followed, rifle slung across his back, sitting at ease on his machine and gazing curiously about.

Out of the end of the village street marched the prisoners and their escort, but presently halted again.

Directly in front of them stood the grey automobile drawn up by the roadside before a pair of iron gates. The gates swung from high stucco walls. On top of the walls were soldiers sitting, rifle on knee; a machine gun commanded the drive, and across the gravel more soldiers were digging a trench, setting posts, and stringing barbed wire which they unwound from great wooden reels.

Through the gates escort and prisoners threaded their way, across a lawn already trampled by cavalry, and straight on toward a pleasant looking and somewhat old-fashioned house set amid older trees and shrubbery, badly broken.

Half a dozen grey-clad staff officers were eating and drinking on the low stone terrace; their horses picketed on the lawn, nibbled the crushed shrubbery. Sentries pacing the terrace and on guard at the door came to attention as the lieutenant in charge of the escort marched his prisoners in.

At a word from him an infantryman went from prisoner to prisoner untying the cords that bound their wrists behind them. Then they were marched into an old-fashioned drawing-room on the left, sentries were placed, the remainder of the escort sat down on the floor with their loaded rifles on their laps and their backs against the wall. Their officer, the lieutenant, walked across the hallway to the room on the left, where the sentry admitted him, then closed the door and resumed his heavy pacing of the black-tiled hall.

The sergeant in charge of the escort lifted his helmet

with its grey-cloth covering, scratched his bullet head, yawned. Then he said, jerking a huge thumb toward the drawing-room: "There's a good wall in the garden behind the house. They'll make the fruit grow all the better—these Belgians."

The lieutenant, coming out of the room opposite, overheard him.

"What your crops need," he said in a mincing Berlin voice, "is plenty of good English filth to spade under. See that you bring in a few cart-loads."

And he went into the drawing-room where the prisoners stood by the windows looking out silently at a great pall of smoke which was hanging over the village through which they had just been marched.

"Which of you is the alleged American?" said the lieutenant in hesitating but correct English.

The young man in knickerbockers rose from a brocaded armchair.

"Follow me. General von Reiter does you the honour to question you."

The young man looked the lieutenant straight in the eye and smiled, stiffly perhaps, because his face was still pallid and the breath of death still chilled it.

"The honour," he said in an agreeably modulated voice, "is General von Reiter's. But I fear he won't realize it."

"What's that!" said the lieutenant sharply.

But young Guild shrugged his shoulders. "You wouldn't understand either. Besides you are too talka-

tive for an underling. Do your duty—if you know how."

"Swine of a Yankee," said the lieutenant, speaking slowly and with painful precision, "do you suppose you are in your own sty of a Republic? Silence! A Prussian officer commands you! March!"

Guild dropped his hands into the pockets of his belted jacket. "You little shrimp," he said good humouredly, and followed the officer, who had now drawn his sword.

Out into the hall they filed, across it to the closed door. The sentry on duty there opened it; the lieutenant, very red in the face, delivered his prisoner, then, at a nod from the grey-clad officer who was sitting behind a writing desk, saluted, faced about, and marched out. The door closed sharply behind him.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN IN GREY

YOUNG Guild looked steadily at the man in grey, and the man in grey gazed as steadily back from behind his desk.

He was a man of forty-five, lean, well built, blond, and of regular features save that his cheek-bones were a trifle high, which seemed to crowd his light blue eyes, make them narrower, and push them into a very slight slant. He had the well-groomed aspect of a Prussian officer, dry of skin, clean-shaven save for the mustache *en croc*, which his bony but powerful and well-kept hands absently caressed at intervals.

His forehead was broad and benevolent, but his eyes modified the humanity and his mouth almost denied it —a mouth firm without shrewdness, not bad, not cruel for the sake of cruelty, yet moulded in lines which promised no hope other than that iron justice which knows no mercy.

"Mr. Guild?"

"Yes, General."

General von Reiter folded his bony hands and rested them on the blotter.

"You say that you are American?"

"Yes."

"How came you to be among the Yslemont hostages?"

"I was stopping at the Hotel Poste when the Uhlans and cyclists suddenly appeared. The captain of Uhlans took the Burgomaster with whom I had been playing chess, myself, the notary, and other leading citizens."

"Did you tell him you are American?"

"Yes. But he paid no attention."

"Had you a passport?"

"Yes."

"Other papers to establish your identity?"

"A few business letters from New York. They read them, but told me they were of no use to me."

"Why did you not communicate with your nearest Consul or with the American Minister in Brussels?"

"They refused me the use of telephone and telegraph. They said that I am Belgian and properly liable to be taken as hostage for the good behaviour of Yslemont."

General von Reiter's hand was lifted meditatively to his mustache. He said: "What happened after you were refused permission to communicate with the American representatives?"

"We were all in the dining-room of the Hotel Poste under guard. At the Burgomaster's dictation I was writing out a proclamation warning the inhabitants of Yslemont not to commit any act of violence against the German soldiery and explaining that we were held as hostages for their good behaviour and that a shot fired

at a German meant a dead wall and a squad of execution for us and the destruction of Yslemont for them—" He flushed, hesitated.

"Continue," said the general.

"While I was still writing the shots were fired. We all went to the window and we saw Uhlans galloping across the fields after some peasants who were running into the woods. Afterward two stretchers came by with Germans lying in them. After that an officer came and cursed us and the soldiers tied our hands behind our backs. We sat there in the dining-room until the Uhlans came riding into the street with their prisoners tied by ropes to their saddles. Then a major of infantry came into the dining-room and read our sentence to us. Then they marched us out into the fog."

The general crossed his spurred boots under the desk and lay back in his chair, looking at Guild all the while.

"So you are American, Mr. Guild?"

"Yes, General."

"In business in New York?"

"Yes."

"What business?"

"Real estate."

"Where?"

"Union Square, West."

"What is the name of the firm in which you are associated?"

"Guild and Darrel."

"Is that your partner's name?"

"Yes. Henry Darrel."

"Why are you here in Belgium?"

"I was making a foot tour in the Ardennes."

"Your business vacation?"

"Yes. I was to meet my partner in Luxembourg and return to New York with him."

"You and your partner are both absent from New York at the same time?"

"Yes."

"How is that?"

"Real estate in New York is quiet. There is practically no business now."

The general nodded. "Yes," he said, "much of what you tell me has been corroborated. In the Seegard Regiment of Infantry Number 569 you were recognized by several non-commissioned officers and men while you stood with the hostages awaiting—ah—justice," he added drily.

"Recognized?" repeated Guild.

"The soldiers who recognized you had served in New York hotels as clerks or waiters, I believe. The captain of that company, in consequence, very properly reported the matter to Colonel von Eschbach, who telephoned to me. And I am here to consider the matter."

Then, folding his arms and looking hard at Guild out of narrowing eyes that began to slant again:

"The hostages of Yslemont have justly forfeited their lives. Two of my officers have been murdered there in the streets. The law is plain. Is there any

reason why these hostages should not pay the proper penalty?"

"The Burgomaster was in the act of dictating——"

"He should have dictated faster!"

"These gentlemen did not fire the shots——"

"But those over whom they exercised authority did!"

Guild fell silent and his features paled a little. The general watched him in silence for a moment and an inquiring expression came into his narrow eyes.

"Well?" he said at length.

Guild lifted his eyes.

"Well, sir," repeated the general. "I have said that there is no reason why the hostages taken at Yslemont should not be turned over to the squad of execution outside there in the hallway."

"I heard you say it."

The general looked at him curiously. "You have nothing to say?"

"No."

"Not for yourself?"

"No."

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Guild, what was your ultimate object in passing through Yslemont?"

"I have already told you that I had intended to make a foot tour through the Three Ardennes."

"*Had* intended?"

"Yes."

"Was that still your intention when you were made prisoner?"

After a moment's hesitation: "No," said Guild in a low voice.

"You altered your plan?"

"Yes."

"You decided to employ your vacation otherwise?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I decided to enlist," said Guild. He was very white, now.

"Enlist?"

"Yes."

"In the British army?"

"The Belgian."

"Oh! So now you do not remind me that, as an American, you claim exemption from the execution of the sentence?"

"I have said enough," replied Guild. A slight colour showed over his cheek-bones.

"If I shoot the Burgomaster and the notary and the others in there, ought I to let you go—on your own representations?"

"I have said enough," repeated Guild.

"Oh! So you refuse to plead any particular exemption on account of your nationality?"

No answer.

"And you, by your silence, permit yourself to be implicated in the responsibility of your fellow-hostages?"

No reply.

"Why?—Mr. Guild. Is it, perhaps, after all be-

cause you are not an American in the strictest sense of that often misused term?"

There was no response.

"You were born in America?"

"Yes."

"Your father, perhaps, was born there?"

"Yes."

"Oh! And *his* father?"

"No."

"Oh! You are, I see, quite candid, Mr. Guild."

"Yes, when necessary."

"I see. Very well, then. Where do you get your Christian name, Kervyn? Is it an American name?"

"No."

"The name, Guild—is that an American name?"

"Yes."

"But—*is* it *your* name?"

"Yes."

"Was it, by chance, ever spelled a little differently—in times gone by, Mr. Guild?"

"Yes."

"Oh! And how, in times gone by, was it spelled by your—grandfather?"

Guild looked him calmly in the eyes. "It was spelled Gueldres," he said.

"I see, I see. That *is* interesting. Gueldres, Kervyn Gueldres. Why, it sounds almost Belgian. Let me see—if I remember—there was such a family inscribed in the Book of Gold. There was even a Kervyn of Gueldres—a count, was he not?—Comte d'Yvoir—

Count of Yvoir, Hastière, and Lesse. Was he not—this Kervyn of Gueldres, many, many years ago?"

"I congratulate General von Reiter on his memory for such unimportant history as that of Belgium," said Guild, reddening.

"Oh, we Germans are studious in our youth—and thorough. Nothing is too unimportant to ignore and"—he smiled grimly—"nothing is too vast for us to undertake—and accomplish."

He lifted his hand to his mustache again. "Mr. Guild," he said, "at the elections in America you—ah—vote of course?"

"No."

"What?"

Guild remained silent.

The general, stroking his mustache, said pleasantly: "The Belgian nobility always interested me; it is so exclusive and there are so few families of the *classe noble*. Except for those ten families who are independent of Court favour—like the Croys and De Lignes—there seem to be only about thirty families who possess the privileges of the Golden Book. Is this not so?"

"General von Reiter appears to know."

The general seemed gratified at this corroboration of his own memory. "And," he went on amiably, "this Belgian nobility is a real nobility. Once of it, always a part of it. And, too, its code is so rigid, so inexorably precise that it seems almost Prussian. For example, the code of the Belgian aristocracy permits none of its members to go into any commercial business, any

trade—even forbids an entry into high finance. Only the Church and Army are open to it; and in the Army only the two Guides regiments and the Lancers are permitted to young men of the aristocracy." He gazed almost mildly at the young man: "You are in business, you tell me?"

"Yes."

"Oh! Then of course you have never been a soldier."

Guild was silent.

"*Have* you ever served in the army?"

"Yes."

"Really! In what American regiment have you served?"

"In a militia regiment of cavalry—the 1st New York."

"How interesting. And—you have never served in the regular army?"

"N—" but Guild hesitated.

General von Reiter watched him intently.

"Did you reply in the negative, Mr. Guild?"

"No, I did not reply at all."

"Oh! Then would you be good enough to reply?"

"If—you insist."

"I insist."

"Very well," said Guild, reddening, "then I have served in the—Belgian army."

The general nodded without surprise: "In what regiment?"

"In the first regiment of Guides."

"You came from America to do this?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"When I became of military age."

"Noblesse oblige?"

No reply.

"In other words, you are an American with all the Belgian aristocracy's sense of responsibility to race and tradition. You are a good American, but there are inherited instincts which sent you back to serve two years with the colours—to serve a country which for ten hundred years your race has defended. And—the Guides alone was open to a Gueldres—where, in America, a Guild was free to choose. Monsieur, you are Belgian; and, as a Belgian, you were properly seized as a hostage and properly sentenced to pay the penalty for the murderous misbehaviour of your own people! I approve the sentence. Have you anything to say?"

"No."

The general regarded him closely, then rose, came around the end of the desk, walked across the room and halted directly in front of Guild.

"So you see there is no chance for you," he said, staring hard at him.

Guild managed to control his voice and speak clearly: "I see," he said.

"Suppose," said von Reiter, still staring at him, "I ask you to do me a favour?"

Guild's face was marble, but he managed to force a smile: "You ask a favour of a prisoner a few moments before his execution?"

"I do. Will you grant it?"

"What is it?"

"Nothing dishonourable to a good—American."

"That is not enough; and you know it."

"Very well. I shall tell you then. I have a daughter in England. I can't get her away from England—I can't get word to her. I—" suddenly his dry, blond features twitched, but instantly the man had them under iron control again, and he cleared his throat: "She is in England near London. We are at war with England. I want my daughter out of the country. I can't get her out. Go and get her for me!"

For a full minute the two men gazed at each other in silence. Then von Reiter said: "I know enough of you. If you say you'll do it I'll free the Burgomaster and the others in there—" he jerked his bony thumb toward the hallway outside—"If you say you'll do it—if you say you'll go to England, now, and find my daughter, and bring her here to me—or conduct her to whatever point I designate, I'll not have those men shot; I'll not burn the rest of Yslemont; I'll see that you are conducted to the Dutch frontier unmolested after you carry out your engagements with me. Will you do it?"

Guild met his intent gaze with a gaze as searching:

"What is your daughter's name?"

"Her name is Karen."

"Where am I to find her?"

"Thirty miles out of London at Westheath. She is known there as Karen Girard."

"What!" said Guild sharply.

"She chose to be so known in her profession."

"Her profession?"

"She has been on the stage—against my wishes. She is preparing herself further—contrary to my wishes. Until she disassociates herself from that profession she will not use the name of von Reiter."

Guild nodded slowly: "*That* is why your daughter is known as Karen Girard?"

"That is why. She is a young girl—nineteen. She went to school in her mother's country, Denmark. She imbibed notions there—and, later, in England among art students and others. It is the well-born who succumb most easily to nonsense once the discipline is relaxed. She has had her way in spite of my authority. Now it is time for such insubordination to cease. I wish to have my daughter back. I cannot get her. You are—American—to all intents and purposes, and you would be under no suspicion in England. Your appearance, your speech, your manners all are above suspicion. You *can* do this. I have made up my mind concerning you, and I trust you. Will you go to England, find my daughter and bring her back to me here; or, if I am ordered elsewhere, will you escort her to my country place in Silesia which is called Rehthal?"

"Suppose I do not find her? Suppose I fail?"

"You will return here and report to me."

"If I fail and I return here and report my failure, does that mean the execution of the gentlemen in the drawing-room yonder?"

"'If you say you'll do it, . . . I'll not have those men shot'"

"It does."

"And the destruction of Yslemont?"

"Absolutely."

"And—" the young man smiled—"incidentally it means my own execution, does it not?"

"It does."

They gazed at each other with intense interest.

"Under such circumstances do you think I'll come back if I am not successful?" inquired the younger man.

"I am satisfied that you will return if you say you will."

"Return to face my own execution?" repeated Guild, curiously. "You believe that of me?—of a man about whom you know nothing—a man who"—his animated features suddenly darkened and he caught his breath a moment, then—"a man who considers your nation a barbarous one, your rulers barbarians, your war inexcusable, your invasion of this land the vilest example of treachery and dishonour that the world has ever witnessed—you still believe that such a man might consider himself bound to return here if unsuccessful and face one of your murdering platoons? *Do* you?" he repeated, the slightest intonation of violence beginning to ring in the undertones of his voice.

Von Reiter's dry, blond features had become greyer and more set. His light blue eyes never left the other; behind their pale, steady scrutiny he seemed to be considering every word.

He drew in his breath, slowly; his very thin lips receded for a moment, then the fixed tranquillity returned.

"We Germans," he said drily, "care nothing for what Europe may think of us or say about us. Perhaps we are vandals, Goths, Huns—whatever you call them. Perhaps we are barbarians. I think we *are!* For we mean to scour the old world clean of its rottenness—cauterize it, cut out the old sores of a worn-out civilization, scrape its surface clean of the parasite nations. . . . And, if *fire* be necessary to burn out the last traces—" His light blue eyes glimmered a very reflection of the word—"then let fire pass. It has passed, before—God's Angel of the Flaming Sword has returned again to lead us! What is a cathedral or two—or pictures or foolish statues—or a million lives? Yes, if you choose, we are barbarians. And we intend to plow under the accumulated decay of the whole world, and burn up its rubbish and found our new world on virgin earth. Yes, we *are* barbarians. And our Emperor is a barbarian. And God, who creates with one hand and destroys with the other—God—autocrat of material creation, inexorable Over-Lord of ultimate material annihilation, is the greatest barbarian of all! Under His orders we are moving. In His name we annihilate! Amen!"

A dead silence ensued. And after it had lasted a little while the tall Prussian lifted his hand absently to his mustache and touched it caressingly.

"I am satisfied, whatever your opinion may be of me or of my people, that you will return if you say you will, successful or otherwise. I promise you immunity if you return with my daughter; I promise you a wall

and a file of men if you return unsuccessful. But, in either event, I am satisfied that you will return. Will you go?"

"Yes," said Guild, thoughtfully. They stood for a moment longer, the young man gazing absently out of the window toward the menacing smoke pall which was increasing above Yslemont.

"You promise not to burn the remainder of the village?" he asked, turning to look at von Reiter.

"I promise not to burn it if you keep your promise."

"I'll try. . . . And the Burgomaster, notary, magistrate, and the others are to be released?"

"If you do what I ask."

"Very well. It's worth trying for. Give me my credentials."

"You need no written ones. Letters are unsafe. You will go to my daughter, who has leased a small cottage at Westheath. You will say to her that you come from me; that *the question which she was to decide on the first of November must be decided sooner*, and that when she arrives at Rehthal in Silesia she is to telegraph me through the General Staff of her arrival. If I can obtain leave to go to Silesia I shall do so. If not, I shall telegraph my instructions to her."

"Will that be sufficient for your daughter to place her confidence in a man absolutely strange to her and accompany that man on a journey of several days?" asked Guild, slightly astonished.

"Not quite sufficient," said von Reiter, his dry, blond visage slightly relaxing.

He drew a rather plain ring from his bony finger: "See if you can wear that," he said. "Does it fit you?"

Guild tried it on. "Well enough."

"Is there any danger of its slipping off?"

Guild tried it on another finger, which it fitted snugly.

"It looks like any other plain gold ring," he remarked.

"Her name is engraved inside."

"Karen?"

"Karen."

There came a short pause. Then: "Do you know London?" asked von Reiter.

"Passably."

"Oh! You are likely to require a touring car. You'll find it difficult to get. May I recommend the Edmeston Agency? It's about the only agency, now, where any gasoline at all is obtainable. The Edmeston Agency. I use it when I am in London. Ask for Mr. Louis Grätz."

After a moment he added, "My chauffeur brought your luggage, rücksack, stick, and so forth, from Yslemont. You will go to the enemies' lines south of Ostend in my car. One of my aides-de-camp will accompany you and show you a letter of instructions before delivering you to the enemies' flag of truce. You will read the letter, learn it by heart, and return it to my aide, Captain von Klipper.

"There is a bedroom above. Go up there. Food will be sent you. Get what sleep you can, because you

are to leave at sunrise. Is this arrangement agreeable to you—*Monsieur le Comte de Gueldres?*"

"Perfectly, General Baron von Reiter."

"Also. Then I have the honour to wish you good night and a pleasant sleep."

"I thank you and I have the honour to wish you the same," said Guild, bowing pleasantly.

General von Reiter stood aside and saluted with stiff courtesy as the young man passed out.

A few moments later a regimental band somewhere along the Yslemont highway began to play "Polen Blut."

If blood were the theme, they ought to have played it well enough.

CHAPTER III

TIPPERARY

AT noon on the following day Kervyn Guild wrote to his friend Darrel:

DEAR HARRY:

Instead of joining you on the Black Erenz for the late August trout fishing I am obliged to go elsewhere.

I have had a most unpleasant experience, and it is not ended, and I do not yet know what the outcome is to be.

From the fact that I have not dated this letter it will be evident to you that I am not permitted to do so. Also you will understand that I have been caught somewhere in the war zone and that is why the name of the place from which I am writing you is omitted—by request.

We have halted for luncheon at a wayside inn—the gentleman who is kind enough to accompany me, and I—and I have obtained this benevolent gentleman's authorization to write you whatever I please as long as I do NOT

1st. Tell you where I am going.

2d. Tell you where I am.

3d. Tell you anything else that does not suit him.

And he isn't a censor at that; he is just a very efficient, polite, and rather good-looking German officer serving as aide on the staff of a certain German major-general.

Day before yesterday, after luncheon, I was playing a quiet game of chess with the Burgomaster of a certain Belgian village, and was taking a last look before setting out for Luxembourg on foot, rücksack, stick, and all, when—well, circumstances over which I had no control interrupted the game of chess. It was white to go and mate in three moves. The Burgomaster was playing black. I had him, Harry. Too bad, because he was the best player in—well in that neighbourhood. I opened with a Lopez and he replied most irregularly. It certainly was interesting. I am sorry that I couldn't mate him and analyze the game with him. However, thank Heaven, I did announce mate in three moves, and the old gentleman was still defiantly studying the situation. I admit he refused to resign.

I left that village toward evening in a large, grey automobile. I and the gentleman who still accompanies me slept fairly well that night, considering the fact that a town was on fire all around us.

In the morning we made slow progress in our automobile. Roads and fields were greenish grey with troops—a vast horde of them possessed the

valleys; they enveloped the hills like fog-banks turning the whole world grey—infantry, artillery, cuirassiers, Uhlans, hussars—all mist colour from helmet to heel—and so are their waggons and guns and caissons and traction-engines and motor-cycles and armoured cars and aeroplanes.

The latter are magnificent in an artistic sense—perfect replicas of giant pigeon-hawks, circling, planing, sheering the air or sailing high, majestic as a very lammergeier, fierce, relentless, terrible.

My efficient companion who is reading this letter over my shoulder as I write it, and who has condescended to permit a ghost of a smile to mitigate, now and then, the youthful seriousness of his countenance, is not likely to object when I say to you that what I have seen of the German army on the march is astoundingly impressive. (He smiles again very boyishly and says he doesn't object.)

Order, precision, a knowledge of the country absolutely unhesitating marks its progress. There is much singing in the infantry ranks. The men march well, their physique is fine, the cavalry are superbly mounted, the guns—(He shakes his head, so never mind the guns.)

Their regimental bands are wonderful. It is a sheer delight to listen to them. They play everything from "Polen Blut" and "Sari," to Sousa, "Tannhäuser," and "A Hot Time," but I haven't yet heard "Tipperary." (He seems puzzled at this, but does not object.) I expect shortly to hear a band playing it. (I have to explain to

my efficient companion that "Tipperary" is a tune which ought to take Berlin and Vienna *by storm* when they hear it. It takes Berlin and Vienna to really appreciate good music. He agrees with me.)

Yesterday we passed a convoy of prisoners, some were kilted. I was not permitted to speak to them—but, Oh, those wistful eyes of Scottish blue! I guess they understood, for they got all the tobacco I had left. (My companion is doubtful about this, but finally shrugs his shoulders.)

There is an awesome noise going on beyond us in—well in a certain direction. I think that all the artillery ever made is producing it. There's practically no smoke visible against the clear blue August sky—nothing to see at all except the feathery cotton fleece of shrapnel appearing, expanding, vanishing over a hill on the horizon, and two aeroplanes circling high like a pair of mated hawks.

And all the while this earth-rocking diapason continues more terrible, more majestic than any real thunder I ever heard.

We have had luncheon and are going on. He drank five quarts of Belgian beer! I am permitted a few minutes more and he orders the sixth quart. This is what I have to say:

In case anything should go wrong with me give the enclosed note to my mother. Please see to it that everything I have goes to her. My will is in my box in our safe at the office. It is all quite clear. There should be no trouble.

I expressed my trunk to your care in Luxembourg. You wrote me that you had received it and placed it in storage to await my leisurely arrival. In case of accident to me send it to my mother.

About the business, my share in any deals now on should go to my brother. After that if you care to take George in when he comes out of Harvard it would gratify his mother and me.

He's all to the good, you know. But don't do this if the business does not warrant it. Don't do it out of sentiment, Harry. If he promises to be of use, and if you have no other man in view, and if, as I say, business conditions warrant such an association with a view to eventual partnership, then if you care to take in George it will be all right.

He has sufficient capital, as you know. He lacks only the business experience. And he is intelligent and quick and it won't take him long.

But if you prefer somebody else don't hesitate. George is perfectly able to take care of his mother and himself.

This is all, I think. I'm sorry about the August fishing on the Black Erenz. It is a lovely stream and full of trout. All Luxembourg is lovely; it is a story-book country—a real land of romance. I wish I might have seen it again. Never were such forests, such silver streams, such golden glades, such wild-flowers—never such hills, such meadows, such skies.

Well—if I come back to you, I come back. If

not—good-bye, old fellow—with all it implies between friends of many years.

Say to your kind friends, the Courlands, who so graciously invited you to bring me with you to Lesse Forest, that I shall not be able to accept their delightful hospitality, and that my inability to do so must remain to me a regret as long as I live. (These guns are thundering enough to crack the very sky! I really wish I could hear some band playing "Tipperary.")

Good-bye for a while—or indefinitely. Good luck to you.

KERVYN GUILD.

"Is that quite acceptable to you?" asked Guild of the young Death's Head hussar beside him.

"Quite acceptable," replied the officer politely. "But what is there remarkable in anybody drinking six quarts of beer?"

Guild laughed: "Here is the note that I desire to enclose with it, if I may do so." And he wrote:

DEAREST:

You must not grieve too much. You have George. It could not be avoided, honourably. He and I are good Americans; we are, perhaps, something else, too. But what the Book of Gold holds it never releases; what is written there is never expunged. George must do what I did when the time comes. I would have done more —was meaning to—was on my way. Destiny has ordered it otherwise.

While I live I think always of you. And it shall be so until the last.

This letter is to be sent to you by Harry Darrel only in the event of my death.

There's a good chance for me. But if things go wrong, then, good-bye, dearest.

KERVYN.

P. S.

Tell George that it's up to him, now.

K.

He held out the letter cheerfully to the hussar, but the latter had read it, and he merely nodded in respectful silence. So Guild folded it, sealed it in an envelope, wrote on it, "For my Mother in case of my death," and inclosed it in his letter to Darrel.

"Any time you are ready now," he said, rising from the little enameled iron table under the arbour.

The hussar rose, clanking, and set a whistle to his lips. Then, turning: "I shall have yet one more glass of beer," he said blandly, but his eyes twinkled.

The grey car rolled up in a few moments. Over it at a vast height something soared in hawk-like circles. It may have been a hawk. There was no telling at such a height.

So they drove off again amid the world-shaking din of the guns paralleling the allied lines toward the west. Ostend lay somewhere in that direction, the channel flowed beyond; beyond that crouched England—where bands were playing "Tipperary"—and where, perhaps, a young girl was listening to that new battle song of

which the young hussar beside him had never even heard.

As the grey car hummed westward over the Belgian road, Guild thought of these things while the whole world about him was shaking with the earthquake of the guns.

"Karen," he repeated under his breath, "Karen Girard."

After a while sentinels began to halt them every few rods. The chauffeur unrolled two white flags and set them in sockets on either side of the hood. The hussar beside him produced a letter from his grey despatch-pouch.

"General von Reiter's orders," he said briefly. "You are to read them now and return the letter to me before the enemies' parlementaire answers our flag."

Guild took the envelope, tore it open, and read:

> Orders received since our interview make it impossible for me to tell you where to find me on your return.
>
> My country place in Silesia is apparently out of the question at present as a residence for the person you are expected to bring back with you. The inclosed clipping from a Danish newspaper will explain why. Therefore you will sail from London on Wednesday or Sunday, taking a Holland liner. You will land at Amsterdam, go by rail through Utrecht, Helmond, Halen, Maastricht. You will be expected there. If I am not there you will remain over night.

If you return from your journey *alone* and unsuccessful you will surrender yourself as prisoner to the nearest German post and ask the officer in charge to telegraph me.

If you return successful you shall be permitted at Eijsden to continue your journey with the person you bring with you, across the Luxembourg border to Trois Fontaines, which is just beyond the Grand Duchy frontier; and you shall then deliver the person in question to the housekeeper of the hunting lodge, Marie Bergner. The lodge is called Quellenheim, and it belongs to me. If I am not there you must remain there over night. In the morning if you do not hear from me, you are at liberty to go where you please, and your engagements vis-à-vis to me are cancelled.

VON REITER, Maj-Gen'l.

The inclosed newspaper clipping had been translated into French and written out in long-hand. The translation read as follows:

Russia's invasion of East Prussia, Posen and Silesia has sent a wave of panic over the eastern provinces of the German Empire, if reports from Copenhagen and Stockholm are to be credited. These reports are chiefly significant as indicating that the Russian advance is progressing more rapidly than has been asserted even by despatches from Petrograd.

A correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* reports from Stockholm that the whole of eastern Ger-

many is upset by the menace of Cossack raids. He hears that a diplomatic despatch from Vienna contains information that the civilian inhabitants of Koenigsberg, East Prussia, and Breslau, in Silesia, are abandoning their homes and that only the military will remain in these strongholds.

. From Copenhagen it is reported, allegedly from German sources, that Silesia expects devastation by fire and sword and that the wealthy Prussian landholders, whose immense estates cover Silesia, are leading the exodus toward the west. The military authorities have done everything possible to check the panic, fearing its hurtful influence on Germany's prospects, but have been unable to reassure the inhabitants. Many of these have seen bands of Cossacks who have penetrated a few miles over the border and their warnings have spread like a forest fire.

For a long while the young man studied the letter, reading and re-reading it, until, closing his eyes, he could repeat it word for word.

And when he was letter perfect he nodded and handed back the letter to the hussar, who pouched it.

A moment later the car ran in among a horde of mounted Uhlans, and one of their officers came galloping up alongside of the machine.

He and the hussar whispered together for a few minutes, then an Uhlan was summoned, a white cloth tied to his lance-shaft, and away he went on his powerful horse, the white flag snapping in the wind. Behind him cantered an Uhlan trumpeter.

Toward sunset the grey automobile rolled west out into open country. A vast flat plain stretched to the horizon, where the sunset flamed scarlet and rose.

But it was almost dusk before from somewhere across the plain came the faint strains of military music.

The hussar's immature mustache bristled. "British!" he remarked. "Gott in Himmel, what barbarous music!"

Guild said nothing. They were playing "Tipperary."

And now, through the late rays of the afterglow, an Uhlan trumpeter, sitting his horse on the road ahead, set his trumpet to his lips and sounded the parley again. Far, silvery, from the misty southwest, a British bugle answered.

Guild strained his eyes. Nothing moved on the plain. But, at a nod to the chauffeur from the hussar, the great grey automobile rolled forward, the two Uhlans walking their horses on either side.

Suddenly, east and west as far as the eye could see, trenches in endless parallels cut the plain, swarming with myriads and myriads of men in misty grey.

The next moment the hussar had passed a black silk handkerchief over Guild's eyes and was tying it rather tightly.

CHAPTER IV

BAD DREAMS

HIS first night in London was like a bad dream to him. Lying half awake on his bed, doggedly, tenaciously awaiting the sleep he needed, at intervals even on its vision-haunted borderland, but never drifting across it, he remained always darkly conscious of his errand and of his sinister predicament.

The ineffaceable scenes of the last three days obsessed him; his mind seemed to be unable to free itself. The quieter he lay, the more grimly determined he became that sleep should blot out these tragic memories for a few hours at least, the more bewildering grew the confusion in his haunted mind. Continually new details were evoked by his treacherous and insurgent memory —trifles terrible in their minor significance—the frightened boy against the wall snivelling against his ragged shirt-sleeve—the sprawling attitudes of the dead men in the dusty grass—and how, after a few moments, a mangled arm moved, blindly groping — and what quieted it.

Incidents, the petty details of sounds, of odours, of things irrelevant, multiplied and possessed him—the

thin gold-rimmed spectacles on the Burgomaster's nose and the honest, incredulous eyes which gazed through them at him when he announced checkmate in three moves.

Did that tranquil episode happen years ago in another and calmer life?—or a few hours ago in this?

He heard again the startling and ominous sounds of raiding cavalry even before they had become visible in the misty street—the flat slapping gallop of the Uhlan's horses on the paved way, the tinkling clash of broken glass. Again the thick, sour, animal-like stench of the unwashed infantry seemed to assail and sicken him to the verge of faintness; and, half awake, he saw a world of fog set thick with human faces utterly detached from limbs and bodies—thousands and thousands of faces watching him out of thousands and thousands of little pig-like eyes.

His nerves finally drove him into motion and he swung himself out of bed and walked to the window.

His hotel was the Berkeley, and he looked out across Piccadilly into a silent, sad, unlighted city of shadows. Only a single line of lighted lamps outlined the broad thoroughfare. Crimson sparks twinkled here and there —the lights of cabs.

The great darkened Ritz towered opposite, Devonshire House squatted behind its grilles and shadowy walls on the right, and beyond the great dark thoroughfare stretched away into the night, melancholy, deserted save for the slight stirring of a policeman here and

there or the passage of an automobile running in silence without lights.

He had been standing by the window for ten minutes or so, a lighted cigarette between his lips, both hands dropped into the pocket of his pyjamas, when he became aware of a slight sound—a very slight one—behind him.

He turned around and his eyes fell upon the knob of the door. Whether or not it was turning he could not determine in the dusk of the room. The only light in it came through his windows from the starry August night-sky.

After a moment he walked toward the door, barefooted across the velvet carpet, halted, fixed his eyes on the door knob.

After a moment it began to turn again, almost imperceptibly. And, in him, every over-wrought nerve tightened to its full tension till he quivered. Slowly, discreetly, noiselessly the knob continued to turn. The door was not locked. Presently it began to open, the merest fraction of an inch at a time; then, abruptly but stealthily, it began to close again, as though the unseen intruder had caught sight of him, and Guild stepped forward swiftly and jerked the door wide open.

There was only the darkened hallway there, and a servant with a tray who said very coolly, "Thanky, sir," and entered the room.

"What-do-you-want?" asked Guild unsteadily.

"You ordered whiskey and soda for eleven o'clock, sir."

"I did not. Why do you try to enter my room without knocking?"

"I understood your orders were not to disturb you but to place the tray on the night-table beside your bed, sir."

Guild regarded him steadily. The servant, clean-shaven, typical, encountered the young man's gaze respectfully and with no more disturbance than seemed natural under the circumstances of a not unusual blunder.

Guild's nerves relaxed and he drew a deep, quiet breath.

"Somebody has made a mistake," he said. "I ordered nothing. And, hereafter, anybody coming to my door will knock. Is that plain?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"Have the goodness to make it very plain to the management."

"I'm sorry, sir——"

"You understand, now?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Very well. . . . And, by the way, who on this corridor is likely to have ordered that whiskey?"

"Sir?"

"Somebody ordered it, I suppose?"

"Very likely the gentleman next door, sir——"

"All right," said Guild quietly. "Try the door while I stand here and look on."

"Very good, sir."

With equanimity unimpaired the waiter stepped to

the next door on the corridor, placed his tray flat on the palm of his left hand, and, with his right hand, began to turn the knob, using, apparently, every precaution to make no noise.

But he was not successful; the glassware on his tray suddenly gave out a clear, tinkling clash, and, at the same moment the bedroom door opened from within and a man in evening dress appeared dimly framed by the doorway.

"Sorry, sir," said the waiter, "your whiskey, sir——"

He stepped inside the room and the door closed behind him. Guild quietly waited. Presently the waiter reappeared without the tray.

"Come here," motioned Guild.

The waiter said: "Yes, sir," in a natural voice. Doubtless the man next door could hear it, too.

Guild, annoyed, lowered his own voice: "Who is the gentleman in the next room?"

"A Mr. Vane, sir."

"From where?"

"I don't know, sir."

"What is he, English?"

"Yes sir, I believe so."

"You don't happen to know his business, do you?"

"No, sir."

"I ask—it's merely curiosity. Wait a moment." He turned, picked up a sovereign from a heap of coins on his night table and gave it to the waiter.

"No need to repeat to anybody what I have asked you."

"Oh, no, sir——"

"All right. Listen very attentively to what I tell you. When I arrived here this afternoon I desired the management to hire for my use a powerful and absolutely reliable touring car and a chauffeur. I mentioned the Edmeston Agency and a Mr. Louis Grätz.

"Half an hour later the management informed me that they had secured such a car for me from Mr. Louis Grätz at the Edmeston Agency; that I was permitted sufficient gasoline to take me from here to Westheath, back here again, and then to the docks of the Holland Steamship Company next Sunday.

"I've changed my mind. Tomorrow is Wednesday and a steamer sails from Fresh Wharf for Amsterdam. Tell the management that I'll take that steamer and that I want them to telephone the Edmeston Agency to have the car here at six o'clock tomorrow morning."

"Very good, sir."

"Go down and tell them now. Ask them to confirm the change of orders by telephone."

"Very good, sir."

A quarter of an hour later the bell tinkled in his room: "Are you there, sir? Thank you, sir. The car is to be here at six o'clock. What time would you breakfast, Mr. Guild?"

"Five. Have it served here, please."

"Thank you, sir."

Guild went back to bed. Another detail bothered him now. If the man next door had ordered whiskey

and soda for eleven, *to be placed on the night-table beside the bed*, why was he up and dressed and ready to open the door when the jingle of glassware awaited him?

Still there might be various natural explanations. Guild thought of several, but none of them suited him.

He began to feel dull and sleepy. That is the last he remembered, except that his sleep was disturbed by vaguely menacing dreams, until he awoke in the grey light of early morning, scarcely refreshed, and heard the waiter knocking. He rose, unlocked his door, and let him in with his tray.

When the waiter went out again Guild relocked his door, turned on his bath, took it red hot and then icy. And, thoroughly awake, now, he returned to his room, breakfasted, dressed, rang for his account, and a few minutes later descended in the lift to find his car and chauffeur waiting, and the tall, many-medalled porter at salute by the door.

"Westheath," he said to the smiling chauffeur. "Go as fast as you dare and by the direct route."

The chauffeur touched his peaked cap. He seemed an ideal chauffeur, neat, alert, smiling, well turned out in fact as the magnificent and powerful touring car which had been as thoroughly and minutely groomed as a race-horse or a debutante.

When the car rolled out into Piccadilly the waiter who had mistaken the order for whiskey, watched it from the dining-room windows. Several floors above, the man who had occupied the next bedroom also watched the depar-

ture of the car. When it was out of sight the man whose name was Vane went to the telephone and called 150 Fenchurch Street, E. C. It was the office of the Holland Steamship Company.

And the waiter who had entered the room unannounced, stood listening to the conversation over the wire, and finally took the transmitter himself for further conversation while Vane stood by listening, one hand resting familiarly on the waiter's shoulder.

After the waiter had hung up the receiver, Vane walked to the window, stood a moment looking out, then came slowly back.

"Gwynn," he said to the waiter, "this man, Guild, seems to be harmless. He's known at the American Embassy. He's an American in the real estate business in New York. It's true that Dart telegraphed from Ostend that Guild came to our lines in a German military automobile under a white flag. But he told a straight story. I'll run out to Westheath, and if his business there is clean and above-board, I think we can give him a clean bill of health."

Gwynn said, slowly: "I don't like the way he questioned me last night. Besides, a sovereign is too much even for an American."

"He might have been afraid of robbery."

"He was afraid of *something*."

"Very well. We've passage on the boat if necessary. I'll go out to Westheath anyway. If I don't care for what he is doing out there we can hold him on the dock."

"Another thing," mused Gwynn. "The Edmeston

Agency may be quite all right, but the man's name is Grätz."

"He's been under scrutiny. He seems to be all right."

"All the same—his name is all wrong. What was that chauffeur's name?"

"Bush."

"*Busch?*"

"He spells it without a *c*. I saw his signature on the Agency rolls."

"Have you his history?"

"He's Canadian. I've sent for it."

"You'll find that his father spelled his name with a *c*," remarked Gwynn, gloomily. But Vane only laughed.

"I'm off," he said. "Stick around where I can get you on the telephone if necessary. But I don't think it will be necessary."

"I do," muttered Gwynn.

CHAPTER V

KAREN

THE journey was the usual one through interminable London streets alternately respectable and squalid; and straight ahead through equally interminable suburbs with their endless "terraces," semi-detached and detached villas, and here and there a fine old house behind neglected garden walls, making its last forlorn stand against the all-destroying inroad of the London jungle.

There had been a heavy haze in London, but no fog. In the country, however, beyond the last outstretched suburban tentacle of the inky octopus the morning sun glimmered low through a golden smother, promising a glimpse of blue sky.

To Guild, one "heath" has always resembled another, and now, as they passed through the country at high speed, there seemed to him very little difference between the several named points which marked his progress toward Westheath. Hedges alternated with ivy-covered walls on either side of a wide, fine road; trees were splendid as usual, sheep fat, cattle sleek. Here and there a common or heath glimmered bewitchingly where

sunlight fell among the whins; birds winged their way, waters glimmered, and the clean, singing August wind of England blew steadily in his face strangely reviving within him some ancient, forgotten, pre-natal wistfulness. Maybe it came from his American mother's English mother.

Near two villages and once on the open highway policemen leisurely signalled the chauffeur to stop, and came sauntering around to the tonneau to question Guild as to his origin, his business, and his destination; quiet, dignified, civil, respectable men they seemed to be in their night cloaks and their always smart and business-like helmets and uniforms.

All seemed satisfied, but all politely suggested that passports were now becoming fashionable in England. And Guild thanked them pleasantly and drove on.

"Bush," he said to his chauffeur, "this spy scare was ridiculed by the newspapers, but it looks to me as though it were being taken rather seriously after all."

"It is, sir."

"I understand that about thirty thousand German and Austrian reservists have been arrested in England since war began?"

"I hear so, sir."

"I suppose the country really is swarming with spies. The paper yesterday said that there was still a great and serious leakage of military information out of England. One paper, yesterday afternoon, reported that a number of spies had already been shot in the Tower."

"I have heard so, sir," said the chauffeur smilingly.

He was a blond, good-looking young fellow. Always his lips seemed to rest in pleasant curves as though his reveries were agreeable.

A few hideously modern detached villas were passed, then hedges, walls, a wood, a modern bridge.

"How near are we to Westheath now?" asked Guild, leaning forward in his seat.

"We are there, sir." And the smiling chauffeur slowed the car to a standstill at a cross-roads where furze and broom grew rankly over the heath and a few rather tawdry villas appeared among the trees beyond.

Guild looked at his watch. It was only a little after seven, an unearthly hour for a call upon any young girl, not to mention one to whom he was personally unknown.

A policeman still wearing his waterproof night cloak, came leisurely across to learn what was wanted.

"I am looking for the villa of Miss Girard—Miss Karen Girard," explained Guild.

"Hyacinth Villa, Number 169. Take the road to the right. It is the only house."

"Thank you."

The car moved forward, swung to the right. About a quarter of a mile away stood a small, modern stucco dwelling behind its hedge of privet. Beyond that there were woods again and dewy uplands glimmering with furze and brake.

When they arrived they found the driveway closed by a gate.

"Never mind; I'll walk to the house," said Guild.

The smiling chauffeur leaned back and opened the tonneau door; Guild descended, looked at the iron gate between its ugly stucco posts, peered through it up the drive with its parallel rows of recently planted lime trees. Everything about the place was recent if not brand new—ugly with the ugliness of well-to-do bad taste. Red geraniums and yellow cannas had been planted in fearsome juxtaposition, salvia flanked a red brick terrace—a most unholy combination of colour. In the early morning the sun exposed the place without mercy. It was lonesome and amazingly depressing.

Glancing up at the gate again he discovered a nickel-plated label riveted to one of the stucco posts. On it was the name of the place, "Hyacinth Villa," and its number 169.

There was no lodge, no bell, but the wicket gate was not locked. So Guild entered.

"Shall I drive up to the house, sir?" inquired the chauffeur.

"No; wait out here."

There seemed to be no sign of life about the house when at last he arrived in front of it—nobody apparently stirring at that hour. He hesitated; he still wore the same knickerbockers and cap which he had worn in Belgium. His sack, which was now in the car, contained only fresh linen; and he began to wonder what his reception might be in such a costume and at such an hour. He doubted that the unconventionality of the daughter of a Prussian aristocrat might extend far

enough to accept him, his rather shabby clothes, and his explanation of the visit.

It was all very well for this young girl to kick over the tradition, cut home traces in the sacred cause of art, call herself Girard, and live in an impossible villa for art's sake. Few well-born Fräuleins ever did this sort of thing, but there had been instances. And anybody in Germany will always add that they invariably went to the devil.

Guild rang. After he had waited long enough he rang again. After that he resumed his ringing. Keeping his finger pressed on the electric button and laying his ear to the door. The bell was doing its duty inside the house; he could hear it.

Presently he heard a fumbling of chains and locks inside, the door opened on a crack and a sleepy voice inquired: "Is it you, Anna?"

Guild hesitated: "I wish to see Miss Girard. Is she at home?"

"Who are you?" demanded the voice no longer sleepy.

"My name is Guild. I am sorry to disturb Miss Girard at such an hour, but I cannot help it. Is Miss Girard in?"

"Yes; I am Miss Girard."

"Are you Miss Karen Girard?"

"Yes. Why do you wish to see me?"

"I can't tell you here. Are you dressed?"

There was a pause, then she said: "No."

"Please dress as quickly as you can. Dress for travel."

"What!"

"If you have a travelling dress put it on. You can pack your luggage while I am talking to you. But dress as quickly as you can and then return and let me in."

She said after a moment's silence: "I certainly shall not do any of those things until I know more about you and about your errand here."

"I have a message for you from General Baron Kurt von Reiter."

"That is possible," she said quietly. "What is the message?"

"I was to say to you that the question which you were to decide on the first of November must be decided sooner."

"I must have clearer proof that your message is genuine. I am sorry to distrust you but I have been annoyed lately."

"Very well," he said. "Open the door a little more. Don't be afraid. I merely wish you to look at a ring which I wear. I want you to draw it from my finger and look at what is engraved inside."

There was another silence. Then the door crack slowly widened.

"Please extend your hand," she said.

There was just enough of space for him to slip his hand between door and frame and he did so. There came a light, soft touch on his ring-finger. The ring slipped off.

When she spoke again her voice was altered: "I shall dress immediately," she said. "I shall not keep

you waiting long. You will find the door open. Please come in when I have gone upstairs."

"Thank you."

He could hear her light, flying feet on the stairs; he waited a little longer, then opened the door.

The hallway was dark, and he left the door open, then entered the room to the left which seemed to be a library, music-room and living-room combined. Books, piano, easy chairs and sofas loomed in the dim light of drawn curtains. An easel on which stood a water-colour drawing occupied the end of the room, and beside it was a table on which were porcelain dishes, tubes of colour and scattered badger brushes.

It was evident that Miss Girard's talents were multiple, for he noticed also a violin and music stand near the piano, and on the violin score as well as on the score spread across the piano the same hand had written "Karen Girard."

He stood by the table, mechanically picking up, one after another, the books lying there. Some of the books were printed in French, some in German, in Italian, in Danish, in Swedish, in English. Miss Girard's name was written in all of them. Miss Girard appeared to be accomplished.

In the dim light Guild began to saunter around the room encountering various evidences of Miss Girard's taste and mode of living—one or two Braun photographs of Velasquez, Boucher, and Gainsborough on the walls—certainly a catholicism of taste entirely admirable;—one or two graceful bits of ancient Chinese

"There came a light, soft touch on his ring-finger"

art—blue and gold marvels of Pekin enamel; a mille-fleur tapestry panel, a bundle of golf clubs, a tennis bat, and a pair of spurs.

He thought for himself that when a girl goes in for all of these accomplishments it is because the gods have been otherwise unkind, and that she has to.

At the same time he remembered the voice he had heard through the scarcely opened door—the lovely voice of a young English girl—than which in all the world there is nothing half so lovely.

And it suddenly occurred to him that there had not been in it the faintest kind or trace of a German accent—that only its childish and sleepy sweetness had struck him first, and then its purity and its youthful and cultivated charm.

Yes, truly, the gods had been kind to this young German girl of nineteen, but it would be a little too much to ask of these same gods that they endow her with figure and features commensurate with her other charms and talents.

Then he suddenly remembered her profession, and that she was studying still for the dramatic profession. And he knew that this profession naturally required exterior charm of any woman who desired to embrace it.

While these ideas and speculations were occupying his mind he heard her on the stairs, and he turned and came forward as she entered the room.

She was a slender, straight girl of medium height; and her face was one of those fresh young faces which

looked fragrant. And instantly the thought occurred to him that she was the vivid, living incarnation of her own voice, with her lilac-blue eyes and soft white neck, and the full scarlet lips of one of those goddesses who was not very austere.

She wore a loosely-belted jacket of tan-coloured covert-cloth, and narrow skirts of the same, and a wide golden-brown hat, and tan spats. The gods had been very, very kind to Miss Girard, for she even adorned her clothes, and that phenomenon is not usual in Great Britain or among German Fräuleins however accomplished and however well born.

She said: "I beg your pardon for detaining you so long on the outside door-step. Since the war began my maid and I have been annoyed by strangers telephoning and even coming here to ask silly and impertinent questions. I suppose," she added, disdainfully, "it is because there is so much suspicion of foreigners in England."

"I quite understand," he said. "Being German, your neighbors gossip."

She shrugged her indifference.

"Shall we talk here?" she asked gravely, resting one very white hand on the back of a chair. "You come from General Baron Kurt von Reiter. The ring is a credential beyond dispute."

"We can talk anywhere you wish," he said, "but there is little time, and somebody must pack a traveller's satchel for you. Have you a maid?"

"She went to London yesterday evening. She was to

have returned on the eleven o'clock train last night. I can't understand it."

"Are you alone in the house?"

"Yes. My cook sleeps out. She does not come until half-past nine. My maid serves my breakfast."

"You haven't had any, then?"

"No."

"Can you fix something for yourself?"

"Yes, of course. Shall I do so now?"

"Yes. I'll go to the kitchen with you while you are doing it. There are several things to say and the time is short."

She led the way; he opened the kitchen shutters and let in the sunshine, then stood a moment watching her as she moved about the place with graceful celerity, preparing cocoa over an alcohol lamp, buttering a roll or two and fetching cup, plate, spoon and marmalade.

"Have you breakfasted?" she asked, looking at him over her shoulder.

"Yes—it is very good of you——"

"There will be plenty of cocoa and rolls—if you care for them. The rolls are yesterday's and not fresh."

She poured the cocoa in two cups and looked at him again in grave invitation.

"You are sure there is plenty?" he asked, smilingly.

"Plenty."

"Then—I do seem to be rather hungry."

He drew a chair for her; she seated herself and ate with a youthful appetite. He drank his cocoa, ate his rolls, and tried not to look at her too often.

"This is why I am here," he said. "I saw General Baron von Reiter four days ago under somewhat extraordinary circumstances.

"He told me that since the war broke out he had not been able to communicate directly with you or to get you out of England, and he asked me to find you and bring you to his estate at Trois Fontaines in Luxembourg."

"To Quellenheim?" she asked, surprised and disturbed. "Is he there?"

"No, he is with a field army, and he does not know where orders from staff headquarters may send him."

"Still," she said, hesitating, "I should think that he might wish me to go to Silesia——"

"Silesia is threatened by the Russian army."

"Silesia!" she repeated, incredulously. "Cossacks in Silesia?" She sat, her cup of cocoa half raised to her lips, her surprised and disconcerted eyes on his. Then she set the cup aside.

"He wishes me to go to Quellenheim? With *you?*"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Travelling on the continent is precarious."

Her eyes rested on his; she said with a candour which he began to understand was characteristic of her: "He seems to have confidence in you. I never heard him speak of you. You are American?"

"Yes."

"That is odd. He never cared for Americans."

Guild said: "He could not send a German into England."

"That is true. Nor an Englishman either. No Englishman would be likely to do anything to oblige a German."

She rose: "I don't understand why Anna, my maid, is still absent," she added uneasily. "My maid often goes to London, but never before has she remained over night. I don't know why she remained. She knew I was alone in the house."

She lifted her serious blue eyes to Guild, then gazed out of the window, evidently perplexed to the point of apprehension.

"I am worried," she said, "very much worried. But that doesn't help, does it?"

"What was her errand in London?" asked Guild.

"She has a brother there. I suppose it's all right or she would have telephoned me."

He said: "No doubt it is all right. And, may I ask you to hasten?"

She rose: "Where am I to go with you?"

"To London and then to the steamer."

"Today?"

"Today is Wednesday. No other Holland Line boat sails for Amsterdam before Sunday, and I have yet our passage to secure and I must also go to the War Office for a few moments. You see we have very little time."

"But I can't pack my boxes then?"

"You will have to leave them."

"You mean I may take only a satchel?"

"A suit-case and satchel if you wish. Leave a note

for your maid instructing her to send by express whatever else you wish sent after you."

"Is this haste necessary, Mr. Guild?"

"Yes, it is. I want to get out of England. I am not sure that I can get out if we wait until Sunday."

"Why not?"

"I may be detained. I may not be permitted to leave with you. All foreigners are under more or less suspicion. I am rather sure that I have been under surveillance already at the Berkeley Hotel."

They had moved out into the hall together while he was speaking, and now, together, they went up the stairs.

"If you don't mind," she said, "my room is in disorder, but I'll have to pack there and you will have to sit there if you wish to talk to me."

It was a white and chintz room in dainty disorder.

She went away and returned in a moment or two with a satchel and suit-case. These she placed on the bed, opened, and then, dragging out various drawers of chiffonier and chest, began to transfer her apparel to the two bags.

"I am extremely sorry," he said, "to hurry you so inconveniently."

"I don't mind," she replied, busy with her packing. "You see I am an actress and I have travelled with a company in the provinces. That *was* an experience!" She turned her pretty head and looked at Guild. "I had no maid then, except at the theatres where we played, and I had to share her with three other girls.

Really, Mr. Guild, it taught me how to pack things rather rapidly."

Her white hands were flying as she folded and placed garment after garment in the suit-case, serene, self-possessed, quite undisturbed by his presence at the rather intimate display of her apparel.

The garments were bewilderingly frail to him; she tucked and packed them into place; a faint fresh scent seemed to freshen the place.

He said: "I don't think we are going to have any trouble about leaving England. But, if any trouble does arise, would you have sufficient confidence in me to do what I say?"

She continued her packing for a few moments without replying, then turned and looked at him.

And at the same moment the telephone on the table beside her bed tinkled.

"There is Anna now!" she exclaimed with the emphasis of relief. "Will you pardon me? No, I don't mean you are to leave the room——"

She lifted the receiver: "Yes, I am here. . . . Yes, this is Miss Girard. Yes, Miss Karen Girard. . . . Mr. Louis Grätz? Oh, good morning!"

At the name of the man with whom she was speaking Guild turned around surprised. At the same instant the girl's face flushed brightly as she sat listening to what the distant Mr. Grätz was saying to her.

Guild watched her; perplexity, surprise, a deeper flush of consternation, all were successively visible on her youthful face.

"Yes," she said to Mr. Grätz. "Yes, I will do whatever he wishes. . . . Yes, he is here—here in my room with me. We were talking while I packed. Yes, I will do so." And, turning her head a little she said to the young man behind her: "The Edmeston Agency desires to speak to you."

He rose and took the receiver from her hand and bent over beside her listening.

"Are you there?" inquired a pleasant voice.

"Yes."

"I am Grätz of the Edmeston Agency. Get that young lady out of the house at once. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Her maid is in trouble. This agency may be in trouble at any moment. She must not wait to pack. Get her into the car and take her to the wharf and on board at once. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Take her as your wife. Do you understand?"

"I understand what you say," he said, amazed.

"That is sufficient. Do as I tell you if you want to leave England."

"Very well. But I must first go to the War Office——"

"No!"

"I must!"

"No. It is useless; hopeless. It would have been the thing to do yesterday. An explanation there would have given you credentials and security. But not to-

day. *She* could not hope to leave. Do you understand?"

"No, but I hear you."

"She could not expect permission to leave because her maid has been arrested."

"What!"

"Yes! The charge is most serious."

"What is it?"

"Get into your car with the young lady and start at once. Don't go to the steamship office in Fenchurch Street. Don't go to the War Office. Go nowhere except to the wharf. Your passage has been secured as Mr. and Mrs. Kervyn Guild of New York. The initials on the baggage will be K. G. Your steamer tickets will be handed to you. You will pay no attention to the man who hands them to you, no attention to anybody. You will go aboard and go to your cabin until the ship is out at sea. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"Good-bye."

CHAPTER VI

MR. AND MRS.

GUILD hung up the receiver, stood a moment in thought then turned around and looked gravely at the girl behind him. She gazed back at him as though still a trifle breathless after some sudden shock.

"What did that man say to you over the wire?" he asked in pleasant, even tones.

"He told me to trust you, and do what you told me to do. He said Anna, my maid, had been arrested."

"Who is he?" asked Guild grimly.

"Do you mean Mr. Grätz?"

"Yes; who is Mr. Grätz?"

"Don't *you* know him?" she said, astonished.

"I have never laid eyes on him. Your father recommended to me the Edmeston Agency and mentioned the name of a Louis Grätz who might be of use to me. That is all I know."

"My—*father*—you say?"

"Certainly, General Baron von Reiter."

"Oh! . . . Then it must be quite all right. Only —I don't understand about my maid——"

"Did Mr. Grätz tell you she had been arrested?"

"Yes."

"On a serious charge?"

"Yes."

"Have you any idea what that charge may be?" he asked, studying her face

"I haven't any idea," she said; "have you?"

"I don't know; perhaps I have. Is your maid German?"

"Yes."

"You brought her with you from Germany?"

"Yes."

"Where did you get her?"

"General von Reiter's housekeeper found her for me."

He hesitated, still looking steadily into those violet blue eyes of hers which seemed to question him so candidly. No, there could be no dishonesty there.

"Miss Girard," he said, "I find that I am going to be very much more frank with you than there once seemed any occasion for being. I am also going to say something to you that may possibly offend you. But I can't help it. It is this: Have you, through your letters to or from your father, imparted or received any military intelligence which might be detrimental to Great Britain or to her allies?"

"Do you mean am I a sort of spy?" she asked, flushing to the roots of her hair

"In substance it amounts to that. And I shall have to ask you to answer me. And I'll tell you why I

ask. I didn't intend to tell you; my personal and private affairs did not concern you. But they do now. And these happen to be the facts in my case: I was taken prisoner in Belgium by the cavalry forming the advance of your father's command. It happened four days ago; I was sentenced to military execution, led out for that purpose, reprieved by your father himself on condition that I undertake to find you and conduct you safely to Trois Fontaines near the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

"If I am unsuccessful in the undertaking, I am pledged to go back voluntarily and face a firing squad. If I am successful I am permitted to go free, and so are my fellow-hostages. And the little town where I was arrested is to be spared."

He passed one hand over his eyes, thoughtfully, then, looking at her very seriously:

"There seemed to be no reason why an honorable man might not accept such terms. I accepted them. But—things have happened here which I neither understand nor like. And I've got to say this to you; if my taking you back to your father means any detriment to England or to the cause England represents—in other words, if your returning to him means the imparting to him of any military information gathered here by you, then—I won't take you back; that's all!"

After a moment, half to herself, she said: "He really thinks me a spy. I knew it!"

"I *don't* think so. I am merely asking you!" he retorted impatiently. "There is something dead wrong

here. I was intending to go to the War Office to tell them there very frankly about my predicament, and to ask permission to take you back in order to save my fellow-hostages, the village, and my own life; and now a man named Grätz of whom I know nothing calls me on the telephone and warns me not to go to the War Office but to get you out of England as soon as I can do it.

"What am I to think of this? What does this man Grätz mean when he tells me that your maid has been arrested on a serious charge and that the Edmeston Agency of a German automobile is in danger?"

The girl stood very still with one slender hand resting on her satchel, her face pale and quietly serious, her brows bent slightly inward as though she were trying to remember something or to solve some unpleasant problem not yet plain to her.

"One thing is clear," she said after a moment, lifting her candid eyes to his; "and that is, if you don't take me back certain friends of yours will be executed and a village in which you seem interested will be destroyed."

"If taking you back means any harm to England," he said, "I won't take you."

"And—your friends? What becomes of them?"

"My friends and the village must take the same chances that I do."

"What chances? Do you mean to go back without *me?*"

"I said I would," he replied drily.

"You said that if you went back without me they'd execute you."

"That's what I said. But there's no use in speculating on what is likely to happen to me if I go back without you. If you don't mind I think we had better start at once. We have had our warning from this man Grätz."

He gave her a searching glance, hesitated, then apparently came to an abrupt conclusion.

"Miss Girard," he said coolly, "your father once took a good look at me and then made up his mind about me. And he was not mistaken; I am what he believes me to be. Now, I also have seen you, and I've made up my mind concerning you. And I don't expect to be mistaken. So I say to you frankly I am an enemy to Germany—to your country—and I will not knowingly aid her—not to save my own skin or the skins of anybody else. Tell me then have you any military knowledge which you intend to impart to your father?"

"No," she said.

"Have you any suspicion that your maid has been involved in any such risky business?"

"I have no knowledge of anything military at all. I don't believe my maid has, either."

"You can recall no incident which might lead you to believe that your maid is engaged in that sort of affair?"

The girl was silent. He repeated the question. She said: "Anna has complained of being followed. I have already told you that she and I have been an-

noyed by impertinent telephone calls and by strange men coming here. Do you suppose they were from Scotland Yard?"

"Possibly. Have you any suspicion why your maid has been arrested?" he persisted. She hesitated; her straight brows knitted slightly again as though in a perplexed effort to remember and to understand. Then she looked up at Guild out of troubled eyes and shook her head:

"I don't know—I don't *know*—whatever my suspicions may be——"

"Suspicions!"

"My personal suspicions could scarcely concern you, Mr. Guild."

The snub was direct; he reddened.

"Very well," he said. "What you say gives me a decent chance for life." He drew a quick breath of relief. "I'm mighty glad," he said; "I have—have seen men die. It isn't—an—agreeable sight. I think we'd better go."

"In a moment."

She took her satchel and went into another room with it, closing the intervening door. She was gone only a few seconds. When she returned she had locked the satchel; he closed and strapped her suit-case and took it in his hand. Together they descended the stairway and started through the lower hall.

And what occurred there happened like lightning.

For, as he passed the door of the darkened living room, a man jumped out behind him and threw one

arm around his throat, and another man stepped in front of him and snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists.

It was not even a struggle; Guild was being held too tightly. The girl shrank back against the wall, flattening herself against it, staring dumbly at the proceeding as though stunned. She did not even cry out when the man who had handcuffed Guild turned on her and caught her by the elbow.

"Come along quietly, miss," he began, when suddenly his voice died out in a groan and he crumpled up on the floor as Bush, the chauffeur, sprang from the passage-way behind him and struck him with something short and heavy.

The man who had thrown his arm around Guild's throat from behind, flung his handcuffed victim aside and whipped out a revolver, but the chauffeur knocked it out of his fist and hit him in the face two heavy, merciless blows, hurling him senseless across the stairs. And all the while the blond young chauffeur was smiling his fixed and murderous smile. And he was like a tiger now in every movement as he knelt, rummaged in the fallen men's pockets, found the key to the handcuffs, leaned over and unlocked them as Guild held out his manacled hands.

"Please watch them, sir," he said cheerfully. "I must find a curtain or something——"

He ran into the living-room, ripped off a long blue curtain, tore it into strips with his powerful blond hands, grinning cheerfully all the while.

"The chauffeur hit him . . . two heavy, merciless blows,
hurling him senseless across the stairs"

"Best to tie them up, sir—this way—allow me, sir—this is the better way—the surer——"

Guild, working hard, he scarcely knew why, felt a touch on his arm.

"Are they dead?" whispered Karen Girard unsteadily.

"No—stunned."

"Are they robbers?"

The blond chauffeur looked up, laughed, then rolled a strip of cloth into a ball for a gag.

"I'm not entirely sure what they are," said Guild. "I'll tell you what I think when we're in the car."

The chauffeur completed his business, looked over the results of his efforts critically, rose to his feet, still smiling.

"Now, sir, if you please—and madam—" And he possessed himself of the luggage.

"Take the door-key, if you please, sir. Lock it on the outside. Thank you. This way, if you please, sir. I took it upon myself to bring the car up to the kitchen entrance."

The car stood there; the bags were flung in; Karen Girard stepped into the tonneau; Guild followed. At the same moment a woman appeared, coming along the brick walk.

"My maid of all work," exclaimed Karen. "What shall I say to her?"

"Anything, madam, but send her home," whispered Bush.

The girl leaned from the car and called out: "I have locked the house and am going away for the

day, Mrs. Bulger. Please come tomorrow, as usual."

The woman thanked her, turned and went away again down the brick walk. They watched her out of sight.

"Now!" said Guild to the chauffeur, "drive to the Holland steamship wharf at——"

"I know, sir," smiled the blond chauffeur.

Which reply troubled the young man exceedingly, for it was evident to him now that, if not herself a spy, this young girl in his charge was watched, surrounded and protected by German agents of a sinister sort—agents known to her father, in evident communication with him, and thoroughly informed of the fact that he wanted his daughter to leave England at once and under the particular escort of Guild.

Nor had Guild the slightest doubt that the two men who had followed and handcuffed him were British Government agents, and that if this young girl's maid had really been arrested for espionage, and if the Edmeston people, too, were suspected, then suspicion had been also directed toward Miss Girard and naturally also to him, who was her visitor.

Guild's troubled gaze rested once more upon the young girl beside him. At the same moment, as though he had spoken to her she turned and looked at him out of eyes so honest, so fearless that he had responded aloud before he realized it: "It's all right. I know *you* are not deceiving me."

"No," she said, "I am not. But could you tell me what all this means—all this that has happened so swiftly, so terribly——"

"I have a pretty clear idea what it means. . . . It's just as well that those detectives did not arrest me. . . . Tell me, did you ever before see this chauffeur, Bush?"

"Never, Mr. Guild."

He nodded; he was slowly coming to a definite conclusion concerning the episode but he kept his own counsel. She said in a low, embarrassed voice: "You think me cowardly. I know it. But I really didn't know what to do."

She was very much in earnest, very intent on his expression, and he did not dare smile.

"What *could* you have done, Miss Girard?" he asked, pleasantly.

"I don't know. I—I felt as though we—you and I—were allies—and that I ought to help you. But it all passed too quickly——"

"There was nothing you could have done for me," he smiled.

She said reflectively: "I myself don't quite see how I could have helped matters. But I didn't wish you to believe me afraid to help you."

He looked into her wistful eyes smilingly: "Somehow," he said, "I don't believe you are really very much afraid of anything."

A slight shudder passed over her. "Violence is new to me. I am not very experienced—not very old you know. And I never saw men fight. And when"—she lowered her voice—"when that chauffeur struck them so heavily—so dreadfully—I—I have never seen men

fight like that—strike each other in the face as though they—they meant murder——"

"Don't think of it now, Miss Girard. You must keep your nerve." He forced a laugh; "you'll need all your composure, too, because I've got something to tell you which you won't like. Shall I tell you now?"

"Yes, please."

"Then—the man, Grätz, says that you must go aboard that steamer as my wife."

The girl looked at him bewildered. "Somebody," continued Guild, "has taken passage for us as Mr. and Mrs. Kervyn Guild. Grätz warned me. My name is Kervyn. Yours is Karen. Our initials are alike. If there is any suspicion directed toward us there are the initials on your satchel and suit-case—and presumably on your clothing. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Do you mind?"

"I mind a little—yes. But I'll do what is necessary," she said, confused.

"I think it is necessary. This man Grätz who seems to know more about my business than I do, tells me so. I believe he is right."

She raised her tragic eyes to his but said nothing.

He leaned nearer to her and spoke in a low voice:

"I've been trying to reason it out," he said, "and I'll tell you what my conclusion is: A German automobile took me to the British lines under a white flag. No doubt Government agents had been informed by tele-

graph and they followed me as soon as I landed on English soil.

"At the Berkeley Hotel I felt very sure that I was being watched. Now, it appears, that this maid of yours has been arrested, and, from what I suspect in regard to the Edmeston Agency—the agency to which your father directed me—I feel very certain that somehow your maid has been involved in the espionage maintained here by the German Government.

"That chauffeur in front of us is from the Edmeston garage; you see what he did to those two detectives! It's very plain to me now that, innocent as you are, you never will be permitted to leave England, even if they don't arrest you, unless you can get out today with me.

"And if you don't leave England it means for me something very serious. It means that I shall have to keep my word and go back alone."

"I know," she nodded, looking up at him very earnestly.

He said without the slightest dramatic emphasis: "It really does mean my death, Miss Girard. I think, knowing your father, that there could be no possible hope for me if I go back there without you. . . . And so, knowing that, I am naturally most anxious to clear out of England while I can do so—get away from here with you—if I can take you with a clear conscience. And"—he looked at her, "I feel that I can do that because you have told me that you have gathered no information for the enemies of England. And"—he

smiled—"to look into your face, Miss Girard, is to believe you."

Some of the pretty color faded from her cheeks; she said: "You asked me if I were a spy. I am not. You asked me if, knowingly, I carry any military information which might aid the enemies of England. And I answered you that, knowingly, I do not carry any such information."

"That is sufficient," he concluded, smilingly.

"No, it is not sufficient," she said. "I wish to say a little more. Let me go to Trois Fontaines alone. I am accustomed to travel. There is no need to involve you. As long as I arrive there what difference does it make whether or not you accompany me?"

"I promised to accompany you."

"You promised that I should arrive safely at Trois Fontaines. It doesn't matter whether you accompany me. Please—please don't. I had rather you did not go."

He said, gravely: "I know how you must feel about travelling as my wife——"

"It isn't that."

"What is it then?" he asked, surprised.

"I don't wish you to take the risk of travelling with me."

"What risk? The worst that could happen to you would be your arrest and detention. If you are not a spy, you can not be proven one."

Her blue eyes gazed absently out across the sunny landscape through which they were speeding.

"You are not a spy," he replied; "what risk do you run—or I?"

She said, still gazing into the sunlit distance: "What is done to spies—if they are caught?"

"It usually means death, Miss Girard."

"I have—" she swallowed, caught her breath, breathed deeply; then—"I have heard so. . . . It is possible that I might be suspected and detained. . . . I had rather you did not attempt to go with me. . . . Because—I do not wish you to get into any difficulty—on my—account."

"Nothing serious could happen to either you or me through anything that you have done."

"I am not sure."

"I am," he said. And added in a lower voice: "It is very generous of you—very kind."

Her own voice was lower still: "Please don't go with me, Mr. Guild. Let me go to the wharf alone. Let me take my chances alone. If there is any difficulty they will arrest you, too. And if I—were convicted——"

"You could not be. That is utterly impossible. Don't think of such things, Miss Girard."

"I *must* think of them. Will you tell me something?" She turned and looked at him curiously, almost wistfully.

"I want to ask you something. You—you said to me that if you thought me a spy, you would not help me to escape from England. You said so, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"You mean it, don't you?"

"I am afraid I do."

"Why? You are not English. You are an American. America is neutral. Why are you an enemy to Germany?"

"I can't tell you why," he said

"*Are* you an enemy to Germany?"

"Yes—a bitter one."

"And if I were a spy, trying to escape from England—trying to escape—death—you would refuse to help me?"

She had turned entirely toward him on the seat beside him; her child-like hands clasped on the robe over her knees, her child-like face, pale, sweet, wistful, turned to his.

"Would you abandon me?" she asked.

"The situation is impossible——"

"Yes, but tell me."

"I don't care to think of such a——"

"Please answer me. Is your partisanship so bitter that you would wash your hands of me—let me go to my death?—go to your own, too, rather than help me?"

"Miss Girard, you are losing your composure——"

"No; I am perfectly composed. But I should like to know what you would do under such circumstances with a girl nineteen years old who stood in danger of death."

"I can't tell you," he said, perplexed and impatient. "I can't tell now what I might do."

"Would you denounce me?"

"No, of course not."

"Would you feel—sorry?"

"Sorry!" He looked at her; "I should think I would!"

"Sorry enough for me to help me get away?"

"Yes."

"Even if I carried military information to Germany?"

He looked into her eyes searchingly for a moment. "Yes," he said; "I'd do what I could for you to get you out of England."

"Even if I had lied to you?"

"You couldn't lie to anybody."

"But if I could? If I have lied and you found it out, would you still try to help me to get away?"

"You are asking something that——"

"Yes, you can answer it. You can think a while first and then answer. I want you to answer. I want to know what you'd do with me."

"You make it a personal matter?"

"Yes. I don't want to know what you'd do in theory; I wish you to tell me what you, personally, would do with me, Karen Girard, if you believed me to be a spy, and if you came to the conclusion that I had lied to you."

"Why do you ask all this? You are over-wrought, unstrung——"

"I am absolutely mistress of myself. And I wish to know what you would do with *me?* Would you let me die?"

"No."

"You'd stand by me still?"

"Yes. There's no use mincing matters. Yes, I would."

"You'd help me to leave England?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

There fell a silence between them, and his face slowly reddened.

"I am not sure why," he said slowly.

"I am. Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, tell me," he said, forcing himself to meet her clear gaze.

"Very well, I'll tell you. It is because we are friends. And that is the real truth. I realize it. From the very beginning it was a friendship, without effort, instantly and mutually understood. Is it not true?"

"Yes."

"And that—the instant liking—was the basis for our confidence in each other. Was it not?"

"It must have been. I trusted you without hesitation."

"And I you. . . . And I did tell you the truth. . . . But not all of it."

"What have you left untold?" he asked.

"Enough to—to frighten me—a little. I am beginning to be afraid—just enough afraid to feel troubled—rather deeply troubled about—you."

"About *me!*"

"Because—we are friends. I don't understand how it has happened so quickly. But it has happened to us—hasn't it?"

"Yes," he said, "it has. I—I am already—devoted to—our friendship."

"I am, too. It seems odd, doesn't it. I have had no friends among men. This is new to me. I don't know what to do about it. I want to be so loyal about it—I wish to be what a man—such a man as you are—desires of a friend—what he requires of friendship . . . *Do* you understand? I am really a trifle bewildered—with the surprise and pleasure of friendship—and with its obligations. . . . But I am very sure that unselfishness is one of its obligations and that truth is another."

"Both are part of you."

"They seem to be now. And so—because we are friends—don't go to the wharf with me. Because I think I may be—arrested. And if I am—it may go hard with me."

She said it so gently, and her eyes were so clear and sweet that for a moment he did not grasp the subtler significance of her appeal.

"You *can't* be involved seriously," he insisted.

"I'm afraid it is possible."

"How?"

"I can only guess how. I may be wrong. But I dare not risk involving you."

"Can't you tell me a little more?"

"Please don't ask."

"Very well. But I shall not leave you."

"Please."

"No. You ask too little of friendship."

"I do not wish to ask too much. Let me get clear of

this affair if I can. If I can't—let me at least remember that I have not involved you in my—ruin."

"Your ruin!"

"Yes. It may come to that. I don't know. I don't know exactly what all this tangle means—what really threatens me, what I have to dread. But I am afraid—afraid!" Her voice became unsteady for a moment and she stared straight ahead of her at the yellow haze which loomed nearer and nearer above the suburbs of London.

He slipped one arm under hers, quietly, and his hand fell over both of hers, where they rested clasped tightly on her lap.

"This won't do," he said coolly. "You are not to be frightened whatever happens. We must go through with this affair, you and I. I know you have plenty of courage."

"Yes—except about you——"

"I stand or fall with you."

"Please, you must not——"

"I must and shall. Within the next few minutes you must regain your composure and self-command. Will you?"

"Yes."

"Because our safety may depend on your coolness."

"I know it."

"Will you remember that we are married?"

"Yes."

"Will it be difficult for you to carry out that rôle?"

"I—don't know what to do. Could you tell me?"

"Yes. If you speak to me call me by my first name. Do you remember it?"

"Kervyn," she said.

"You won't forget?"

"No."

"I think you had better say 'no, dear.' Try it."

"No—dear."

"Try it again."

"No, dear."

"Letter perfect," he said, trying to speak lightly. "You see you look about seventeen, and it's plain we couldn't have been married very long. So it's safer to say 'yes, dear,' and 'no, dear,' every time. You won't forget, Karen, will you?"

She flushed a trifle when her name fell from his lips. "No, dear," she said in a low voice.

"And if anybody addresses you as Mrs. Guild—will you try to be prepared?"

"Yes—dear. Yes, I will—Kervyn."

He laughed a trifle excitedly. "You are perfect—and really adorable in the part," he said. And his nervous excitement in the imminence of mutual danger subtly excited her.

"I ought to do it well," she said; "I have studied dramatic art and I have had some stage experience. It's a part and I *must* do it well. I shall, really—Kervyn, dear."

He laughed; the dangerous game was beginning to exhilarate them both, and a vivid colour began to burn in her delicate cheeks.

Suddenly the blond chauffeur pulled the car up along the curb in a crowded street and stopped.

"It is better, sir, to take a hansom from here to the wharf."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, sir. . . . Pardon, sir, here are passports for madam and yourself." And he handed the papers very coolly to Guild.

The young man changed colour, realizing instantly that the papers were forged.

"Had I better take these?" he asked under his breath.

"Yes, sir," said Bush, smiling his eternal smile and opening the car door for them.

Guild descended. Bush set the luggage on the curb, touched his cap, and said: "Walk south, sir, until a cabby hails you. Good-bye, sir. A pleasant trip, madam." And he sprang back into the car, started it, and rolled away grinning from ear to ear.

Guild took the luggage in both hands; Karen walked beside him. At the end of the square the driver of a hansom held up one hand inquiringly, then smiled and drew in to the curb.

"Fresh Wharf, sir?" asked the cabby.

"Yes," said Guild, calmly, red with surprise.

"Thanks, sir. I understand all about it."

CHAPTER VII

THE SATCHEL

IT was only a short drive to Fresh Wharf by London Bridge. A marching column of kilted Territorials checked them for a while and they looked on while the advanced guard of civilians surged by, followed by pipers and then by the long leaf-brown column at a smart swinging stride.

When the troops had passed the hansom moved on very slowly through the human flotsam still eddying in the wake of the regiment; and after a few more minutes it pulled up again and Guild sprang out, lifted the young girl to the sidewalk, and handed the fare to the driver.

The latter leaned over and as he took the coins he thrust a parcel into Guild's hands. "Your change, sir," he said genially, touched his top hat and drove off, looking right and left for another fare.

Guild's surprised eyes fell on the packet. It contained two steamer tickets strapped together by a rubber band.

Pushing through the throng where policemen, wharf officials and soldiers in khaki were as numerous as civ-

ilians, Guild finally signalled a porter to take the luggage aboard. Karen retained her satchel. A brief scrutiny of his tickets detained them for a moment, then the porter led them up the gang-plank and aboard and a steward directed them to their stateroom. At the same moment a uniformed official stepped up to Guild.

"Sorry to trouble you, sir," he said politely, "but may I have your name?"

"My name is Kervyn Guild."

The official glanced over the steamer list. "You have papers of identification, Mr. Guild?"

Guild handed him his forged passports. The official took them, glanced at Karen, at the luggage which the porter bore.

"Where do you go from Amsterdam, Mr. Guild?"

"Through Holland."

"Naturally. And then?"

"To the Grand Duchy."

"Luxembourg?"

"Yes."

"Where in Luxembourg?"

"I have been invited to visit friends."

"Where?"

"At Lesse Forest."

"Where is that?"

"Partly in the Duchy, partly in Belgium."

"Who are your friends?"

"Mrs. and Miss Courland of New York and a Mr. Darrel."

"Madam goes with you?"

"Yes."

The official began to unfold the passports, while he looked sideways at the luggage. Holding the passports partly open in one hand he pointed to Karen's satchel with the other.

"Please open that," he said, and began to examine the passports. A deadly pallour came over the girl's face; she did not stir. Guild turned to glance at her and was stricken dumb. But she found her speech. "Dear," she said, with white lips, "would you mind stepping ashore and getting me something at a chemist's?" And under her breath, pressing close to him: "Go, for God's sake. I am afraid I shall be arrested." A terrible fear struck through him.

"The satchel!" he motioned with his lips.

"Yes. Go while you can. Go—go—dear."

"I'll be back in a moment, Karen," he said, coolly took the satchel from the porter, turned with it toward the gang-plank.

The official raised his eyes from the passport he was scanning.

"One moment, sir," he said.

"I'll be back directly," returned Guild, continuing on his way.

"Where are you going, Mr. Guild?"

"To a chemist's."

"Be kind enough to leave that satchel and remain here until I have finished," said the official coldly. And to Karen: "Mrs. Guild, will you kindly open that bag?"

"Certainly. I have the key somewhere"—searching

in her reticule. And as she searched she lifted her eyes to Guild. Her face was dead white.

"Dearest," she said in a steady voice, "will you go to the chemist's while I am opening my bag. I *must* have something for this headache."

Her agonized eyes said: "Save yourself while you can; I am caught!"

But Guild turned and came back to her, close, standing beside her.

"I'll open the luggage," he said quietly. "You had better step ashore and get what you need." And, in a whisper: "Go straight to the American Ambassador and tell him everything."

She whispered: "No; I beg of you go. I beg of you, Kervyn."

He shook his head and they stood there together; he grave and silent, assailed by a terrible premonition; she white as death, mechanically fumbling in her reticule with slim, childish fingers.

The official was deeply immersed in the passports and continued so even when Karen's tremulous fingers held the key. "Give it to me," whispered Guild.

"No—" She beckoned the porter, took the satchel, and at the same moment the official looked up at her, then holding both passports, came over to where they were standing.

"Your papers are in order, Mr. Guild," he said. "Now, Mrs. Guild, if you will open your satchel——"

"I'll attend to that, Holden," broke in a careless voice, and the satchel was taken out of Karen's hands

by a short, dark young man in uniform. "I want you to go forward and look at a gentleman for The Hague who has no papers. He's listed as Begley. Do you mind?"

"Right," said Holden. "Here, Mitchell, these papers are satisfactory. Look over Mr. Guild's luggage and come forward when you're finished. What's his name? Begley?"

"Yes, American. I'll be with you in a moment."

Holden hastened forward; Mitchell looked after him for a moment, then calmly handed back the unopened satchel to Karen and while she held it he made a mark on it with a bit of chalk.

"I pass your luggage," he said in a low voice, stooping and marking the suit-case and Guild's sack. "You have nothing to fear at Amsterdam, but there are spies on this steamer. Best go to your cabin and stay there until the boat docks."

The girl bent her little head in silence; the porter resumed the luggage and piloted them aft through an ill-lighted corridor. When he came to the door of their cabin he called a steward, took his tip from Guild, touched his cap and went away.

The steward opened the stateroom door for them, set the luggage on the lounge, asked if there was anything more he could do, was told that there was not, and took himself off.

Guild locked the door after him, turned and looked down at the girl, who had sunk trembling upon the lounge.

"What is there in that satchel?" he asked coldly.

"I don't know."

"*What!*" he said in a contemptuous voice.

"Kervyn—my friend—I do not know," she stammered.

"You *must* know! You packed it!"

"Yes. But I do not know. Can't you believe me?"

"How can I? You know what you put into that satchel, don't you?"

"I—put in toilet articles—night clothes—money."

"What else? You put in something else, didn't you? Something that has made you horribly afraid!"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Kervyn—I don't *know* what it is. I must not know. It is a matter of honour."

"If you don't know what it is you carry in that satchel you evidently suspect what it might prove to be."

"Yes."

"You have very strong suspicions?"

"Yes, I have."

"Why did you take such a thing?"

"I promised."

"Whom?"

"I can't tell you. It is a matter of honour. I—I didn't want to involve you if things turned badly. I asked you to leave me. . . . Even at the last moment I tried to give you a chance to go ashore and escape. Kervyn, I've tried to be honourable and to be loyal to

you at the same time. I've tried—I've tried—" Her childish voice faltered, almost broke, and she turned her head sharply away from him.

He dropped onto the lounge beside her, sick with anxiety, and laid his hand over hers where it lay in her lap.

"I'm afraid that you have papers in that satchel which might mean the end of the world for you," he said under his breath. "God alone knows why you carry them if you suspect their contents. . . . Well, I won't ask you anything more at present. . . . If your conscience acquits you, I do. I do anyway. You have given me plenty of chances to escape. You have been very plucky, very generous to me, Karen."

"I have tried to be," she said unsteadily. "You have been far too kind to me, Kervyn. . . . I—I don't mean to tremble so. I think I am feeling the—the reaction."

"Lie down. I am afraid I'll have to stay here——"

"Yes; don't go out on deck. Don't take any more risks. . . . I'll lie down if I may." She rose, looked around with eyes still darkly dilated by fear:

"Oh!" she breathed—"if we were only out of British waters!"

He looked at his watch, and at the same moment a deep blast from the steamer vibrated through the cabin.

"They've cast off," he said calmly.

The girl had flung herself on the bed and buried her face in the pillow. Her brown velvet hat had fallen to the floor, her thick brown hair clustered in glossy disorder over neck and cheek. One slim hand clutched

convulsively a tiny handkerchief crushed into a ball.

"We have every chance now," he said very gently, bending over the pillow—"barring a wireless to some British guard-ship. Don't give way yet, Karen." He laid a cool, firm hand over hers and tried to speak jestingly. "Wait until there's no danger at all before you go all to pieces," he whispered.

As he bent above her, he became conscious of the warm fragrance of tears. But no sound came, not a quiver. And after a while he went over to the sofa and sat down, staring at the locked satchel on the floor, vaguely aware that the boat was in steady motion.

"Karen," he said after a moment.

"Yes—dear."

"You know," he said, forcing a laugh, "you needn't say it when we're alone—except for practice."

"Yes, dear, I know."

"May I ask you something?"

"Yes, please."

"Did you know that official named Mitchell?"

"Yes."

"Who was he?"

"Mr. Grätz."

CHAPTER VIII

AT SEA

THE funnel smoke blew low, burying the after-decks, and a hurricane of scud and spindrift swept everything forward, drenching the plunging steamer to the bridge. Stanchions, davits, hatches were all a-dip, decks a-wash, and the Dutch ensign whipping aloft in a thick grey sky that seemed to speed astern as though in chase of the heaving grey waste of waters that fled away beneath.

Here and there a trawler tossed and rocked; lean, melancholy wanderers on the face of the waters; twice the raking stacks of destroyers, smothered in foam, dashed eastward running full speed on some occult trail twixt sky and sea.

The grey world grew duller, duller; one by one the blinding searchlights on coast-guard ships broke out, sweeping sky and ocean as though in desperate appeal to the God above and in menacing warning to the devils that lurked below.

For they said the North Sea was full of them; legions of them tossed broadcast from the black hell of some human mind. And beneath them, deeper, lying as still

as death on the Channel's floor, waited the human submarines in unseen watery depths—motionless, patient, awaiting the moment to strike.

Night came; the white level glare of searchlights flooded the steamer, lingered, shifted, tossed their dazzling arms heavenward as though imploring the Most High, then swept unseen horizons where the outermost waters curve with the curving globe.

Only one light burned in the stateroom, but the port was not covered.

Karen lay on the bed, unstirring save for a slight tremor of her shoulders now and then. Her brown hair, half loosened, had fallen in thick burnished curls on the pillow; one hand covered her eyes, palm outward. Under it the vivid lips, scarcely parted, rested on each other in a troubled curve.

Guild brooded silently on the lounge under the port. Sometimes his sombre gaze rested on her, sometimes on the locked satchel which had rolled to the side of the bed.

Every time the arrowy beam of light from a warship flooded the cabin with swift white splendour his heart seemed to stop, for the menace of the wireless was always a living dread; and the stopping of a neutral ship and the taking from it of suspects had become a practice too common even to excite comment, let alone protest.

Twice they were stopped; twice Ardoise signals twinkled; but no cutter came alongside, and no officer

boarded them. It was an eternity of suspense to Guild, and he stood by the open port, listening, the satchel in his hand ready to fling it out into the turmoil of heaving waters.

The steward came, and Guild ordered something served for them both in the stateroom. Karen had not awakened, but her hand had slipped from her eyes and it lay across the edge of the bed.

On the bridal finger glimmered the plain gold band—his credentials to her from her father.

He went over and looked down into the white, childish face. Faultless, serene, wonderful as a flower it seemed to him. Where the black lashes rested the curve of the cheek was faintly tinted with colour. All else was snowy save for the vivid rose of the scarcely parted lips.

Nineteen!—and all those accomplishments which her dim living-room at Westheath had partly revealed—where books in many languages had silently exposed the mind that required them—where pictures, music—all the unstudied and charming disorder of this young girl's intimate habitation had delicately revealed its tenant.

And what her living-room had foreshadowed was only, after all, but a tinted phantom of the girl he had come to know in the flesh—the real mistress of that dim room quickened to life—a warm, living, breathing reality, low-voiced, blue-eyed, winsome and sweet with the vague fragrance of youth incarnate clinging to her, to every gesture, every movement, every turn of her

head—to her very skirts it seemed—youth, freshness, purity unblemished.

As he stood there he tried to realize that she was German—this young girl with her low and charming English voice and her accentless English speech.

He had listened in vain for any flaw, any indication of alien birth. Nothing betrayed her as a foreigner, except, possibly, a delightfully quaint formality in accepting any service offered. For when he asked her whether she desired this or that, or if he might do this or that for her, always her answer in the affirmative was, "Yes, please," like a little girl who had been carefully taught to respect age. It amused him; for modern English young women are less punctilious with modern youth.

There came a dull clatter of crockery from the passageway; Guild turned and opened the door. The waiter produced a folding table, spread it, and arranged the dishes.

"That will be all," whispered Guild. "Don't knock again; I'll set the tray outside."

So the waiter went away and Guild closed the door again and turned back to the bed where Karen lay. Her delicate brows were now slightly knitted and the troubled curve of her lips hinted again of a slumber not wholly undisturbed by subconscious apprehension.

"Karen," he said in a low voice.

The girl opened her eyes. They had that starry freshness that one sees in the eyes of waking children. For a moment her confused gaze met his without ex-

pression, then a hot flush stained her face and she sat up hurriedly. Down tumbled the thick, burnished locks and her hands flew instinctively to twist them up.

"I didn't realize that I had been asleep. Please, will you turn your back"—her glance fell on the table—"I shall be ready in a moment—Kervyn."

"Had I not better give you the place to yourself?"

"Yes, please."

"I'll do a sentry-go in the corridor," he said. "Open the door when you're quite ready."

So he went out and walked up and down until the stateroom door opened and her low voice summoned him.

"I can't eat," she said.

"Do you feel the sea?"

"No"—she smiled faintly—"but the excitement of the day—the anxiety——"

"We'll have some tea, anyway," he said.

They ate a little after all, and the hot and rather vile tea stimulated her. Presently he set tray and table outside in the corridor and came slowly back to where she had gathered herself in a corner of the sofa.

"The sea is rather rough," he said. "You seem to be a good sailor."

"Yes, I am. My father had a yacht and my mother and I always went when he cruised."

This slightest glimpse of personal history—the first she had vouchsafed—the first slight lifting of the curtain which hung between them, aroused his latent curiosity.

What else lay behind that delicate, opaque veil which covered the nineteen years of her? What had been the childhood, the earlier life of this young girl whom he had found living alone with a maid and a single servant at an obscure heath outside of London?

Gently born, gently bred young girls of aristocratic precedents, don't do that sort of thing. Even if they desire to try it, they are not permitted. Also they don't go on the stage, as a rule.

Neither the sign manual, the sign visible of the theatre, nor yet that occult indefinable something characteristic of the footlights appeared to taint her personality.

Talented as she was undoubtedly, cultured and gently nurtured, the sum total of all her experience, her schooling, her development, and her art had resulted only in a charming harmony, not a personality aggressively accented in any single particular. Any drawing-room in any country might have contained this young girl. Homes which possess drawing-rooms breed the self-possession, the serenity, the soft voice, the winsome candour and directness of such girls as she.

She was curled up in the corner of the sofa where he had placed behind her the two pillows from the bed, and her winning blue eyes rested every few minutes upon this young man whom she had known only a few hours and whom she already, in her heart and in her mind, was calling a friend.

She had never had any among young men—never even among older men had she experienced the quiet

security, the untroubled certainty of such a friendship as had begun now—as had suddenly stepped into her life, new, yet strangely familiar—a friendship that seemed instantly fully developed and satisfactory.

There appeared to be no room for doubt about it, no occasion for waiting, no uncertainty in her mind, no inclination and no thought of the lesser conventionalities which must strew elaborately the path of first acquaintance with the old, old-fashioned garlands—those prim, stiff blossoms of discretion, of propriety, of self-conscious concession to formula and tradition.

No; when her eyes first fell on him her mind and heart seemed to recognize what neither had ever before beheld—a friend. And from that moment the girl had accepted the matter as settled, as far as she herself was concerned. And she had lost very little time in acquainting herself with his views upon the subject.

That he had responded to the friendship she had so naïvely offered did not surprise her. She seemed to have expected it—perhaps in the peril of the moments when they were nearing London and doubt and suspicion in her mind concerning the contents of her satchel were becoming an agony to her as they grew more definite—perhaps even then the sudden and deep sense of gratitude for his response had made courage a new necessity and had armoured her against panic—for friendship's sake.

All she realized in that moment was that this friendship, so sudden, so vital, was already so strong in her,

so real, that even in the terror of that instant she thought of the danger to him, and asked him to let her go on alone.

Perhaps they both were thinking of these things—she, curled up in her corner, looking thoughtfully at him; he, knees crossed, gazing restlessly from object to object in the unsteady stateroom, but his eyes always reverting to her.

Then the duet of silence ended for a while. He said: "You must not suppose that I am not keenly alive to the kindness, the fearless generosity you have shown me all through this affair. What you suffered is lodged forever in my mind—and in my heart."

"What you have done for me is in my—heart," she said in her sweetly modulated voice.

"I have done very little——"

"You would not leave me!"

"My own life was forfeit if I did——"

"No! You did not reason that way! Besides, had I managed to get through alone, you should have had your life back again to do with as you pleased. No; you did not reason that way. You stood by a friend in peril—at your own peril."

She drew a deep, tremulous breath. "More than that," she said, "you stood by me when you almost believed I had lied to you—lied shamefully."

"I had my plans ready—in that event," he said, forcing a laugh.

"You *did* doubt me?"

"Yes."

She bent her head, looked thoughtfully at her hands, which clasped one knee, then, lifting her eyes: "I forgive you," she said gravely.

He flushed: "I did not know you—did not realize—what you are——"

"You were slower than I."

"What?"

"I trusted *you*—from the first."

He was silent; she watched him for a few moments, then:

"When you concluded that I had lied to you, what plans had you ready?"

"I had rather not say——"

"Please do."

He bit his lip: "I had decided to take your satchel from you."

"Against my wishes?" she asked, amazed.

"Yes."

There was no resentment, only a childish surprise: "Why?"

"I told you that I am an enemy to your country."

"Yes, I know——"

"I told you that I would not knowingly permit you to take out of England anything which might be detrimental to England's interests. And I made up my mind that if you had deceived me—and although I stood by you—because you are only a young girl—and were in danger from those who make no allowance for youth and sex—nevertheless, as soon as you were in personal safety, I meant to take from you whatever

you had concealed from me and which might have been of service to England's enemies."

"Would you have done that?"

"Yes, if you had been untruthful to me."

She bent her head, thoughtfully; then looking up at him: "Yes; that would have been just. . . . But I have not been untruthful."

His perplexed and slightly careworn eyes met hers.

"I can't doubt you," he said. "I know you have been truthful. But—what *is* in that satchel? Forgive me, I *must* ask you. Because there is evidently enough there to terrify you at the thought of British eyes inspecting it."

"Kervyn—can't you believe me when I tell you that I don't *know* what is in that satchel?"

"I *do* believe you. But tell me what you are afraid it might be."

"I can't—truly I can't tell you. Don't you understand? Don't you realize that I must have promised?"

"Promised?"

"Yes—not to unlock or open the satched. I *did* promise."

"To whom did you make that promise?" And, as she did not reply: "Was the promise made to anybody I ever met?"

She looked at him in a distressed way, but his face darkened and his determination increased.

"Did you make that promise to a German? An officer? Did you make it to General von Reiter?"

"Yes."

"I see. And there *are* papers in that satchel!"

"Yes."

"Where did you get them?"

"From—Mr. Grätz."

"You were accustomed to receive papers from Mr. Grätz?"

"Sometimes."

"At certain intervals?"

"I don't know. Whenever Mr. Grätz telephoned, Anna, my maid, went to London and usually brought back the—the plans."

"Plans!"

"Yes. I understood that they were plans of a new automobile which was being designed by the Edmeston Agency for their Berlin branch. Mr. Grätz mentioned it as the Bauer-Schroeder car."

"To whom were these plans to go, ultimately?"

"I sent them to New York."

"To whom?"

"To Schimmel and Company, Broadway."

"Have you any idea where Schimmel and Company sent those plans?"

"Yes. I never thought much about it then, but to-day I realized that sooner or later the plans were sent to General von Reiter—in Berlin."

"You are sure?"

"Yes. I saw them when I was there last April. He said that those were the plans which I had sent to Schimmel and Company."

"You *saw* the plans?"

"Yes."

"Were they plans of an automobile?"

"I—thought so then. They were on very thin paper. I supposed them to be drawings of detached machinery in sections. They looked to me like fragments of something."

"And now—in the light of what happened today—what do you believe those drawings represented?"

"I have no idea—really I haven't. Only—" She hesitated, troubled, twisting her fingers on her knees.

"Only—" he prompted her.

She said, with a tremulous intake of breath: "I think I had better tell you, Kervyn. This is what frightened me—what the experience of today seemed to suddenly make plain to me—I mean your coming to Westheath, Mr. Grätz telephoning about obeying you, and informing me of the arrest of my maid—these things, and the war, and what I have read about German spies in England—all this flashed up in my mind at the same time when you turned from the telephone and asked me such terrible questions.

"It made clear to me, or seemed to, something else that I had not understood at the time—" She hesitated, her gaze concentrated as though in an effort to recollect and visualize some scene—

"It was last April, in Berlin. . . . General Baron von Reiter said something to me as I was waiting for his car to take me to the station—I was departing for England again—and he said—he said——"

"Yes, Karen?"

"He said something about war—the possibility of it. And he said that in case war ever came while I was in England, and if, when it came, I had in my possession any automobile plans from the Edmeston Agency—from Mr. Grätz—that I was to bring them with me to Germany—not to show them to anybody, not to send them by mail, but to bring them back and deliver them to him."

"Yes, Karen."

"I promised. . . . He made me promise again. He was very serious. He said that on my obedience in this matter might depend the lives of many people. I had no idea what he meant by that—until today. . . . And what I fear has happened is that Anna, who went yesterday to London because Mr. Grätz telephoned, was arrested while in possession of papers delivered to her by Mr. Grätz. . . . And that these papers were *not* what I had always supposed. And that is why I was suddenly afraid—afraid—Oh, Kervyn!—I cannot describe the fear that leaped up and seized me when you asked me those dreadful questions! Suddenly everything, every detail in the entire matter seemed to grow clear and terrible to me. . . . I—I went into my dressing-room—and steadied myself against the wall—feeling faint for a moment.

"Then I took from my dressing-table the papers which I had from Anna's last visit to Mr. Grätz. They had remained there in the drawer because I had been told not to mail them, and no word had come for me to go back to Berlin. So I had them on my hands.

But until you came I gave them no thought—merely conscious that I had promised to take them back with me.

"But—in that terrible moment when I stood there leaning against the wall, I remembered what was said to me about the lives of many people depending upon my keeping my promise. It was a hideous thing to remember at such a time. . . . But I could not break my word—for the sake of these imperilled people also —could I, Kervyn? . . . So I took the papers and locked them in my satchel. And afterward I—I *asked* you to leave—" Her voice quivered; she bent her head and sat twisting her slim fingers on her lap.

"That is all I know," she faltered—"all I know about it. I have tried to be true to my word, and loyal to—you."

Her emotion was reflected in his own face; he bent forward, laid his hand over her restless fingers.

"Karen," he said, "you are the pluckiest, straightest, whitest woman I ever knew."

"I'm only—honest," she whispered. . . . "And I want you to think me so."

"I do!—Karen, dearest, sincerest, most fearless of women!"

"Do you believe me—that?"

"Karen, I——"

A sharp knocking at the door cut him short. They looked at each other, startled. At the same moment he realized that the ship had stopped.

"Could it be the stewardess?" she whisperd.

"I don't know."

He rose, picked up the satchel and went to the open port.

"If a British guard-ship has stopped us to search us, we can't have this thing found," he said.

She stared at him in frightened silence.

"They may have found those men we tied up and left in your house at Westheath!" he whispered. "A wireless would set a score of warships ready to intercept us. If they board us they must not find that satchel."

The sharp, loud rapping came again.

Guild went to the open port, pushed the satchel through it, leaned out himself. As he did so something brushed his head, and, looking up, he saw a rope's end dangling there.

In an instant he had tied it to the handle of the satchel, stepped back, screwed the heavy glass fast, and then, motioning Karen to fling herself on the bed, he went to the door, opened it, and stood yawning in the face of a ship's officer.

"Don't wake my wife," he said drowsily. "What is the trouble?"

"The trouble is," replied the officer coldly, "that a British cruiser has signalled us to stop, and has asked whether an American named Guild is aboard."

CHAPTER IX

H. M. S. WYVERN

"WELL," said Guild coolly, "have you any idea what a casual British cruiser might want of *me?*"

"I have not," said the officer, "so perhaps you had better tell *me* what is wanted of yourself and your wife by the captain of that warship. It might save some argument between him and our own captain. We are due in Amsterdam at noon tomorrow," he added meaningly.

"Do you mean to say that the officer in command of this British ship desires to speak to my wife?"

"His signals stopped us and his wireless told us to detain you and your wife."

"What ship is it?" demanded the young man, so nervous now that he scarcely knew what he was saying.

The Dutch officer remained icy and precise: "The ship is the light cruiser *Wyvern*, of the 'Monster' class. Her consorts yonder are the *Hippogriff* and *Basalisk*—if this information enlightens you, Mr. Guild."

"It does not. But I know this much: You can't detain an American! Neither can that British captain

take a neutral from a neutral ship! And that settles the matter."

"Be good enough to come on deck," said the Hollander in his correct and fluent English. "The captain desires to speak with you."

"Very well. I'll follow you in a moment"—and turning to Karen: "Dearest, are you awake?"

"Yes, dear."

"The captain wishes to see me. I'll be back directly." He stepped out into the corridor, hesitated, excused himself to the officer, and returned to Karen, closing the door and locking it.

She was sitting up on the bed, very still and white, and when he came over to her she instinctively laid both chilled hands in his. He held them in a firm and reassuring clasp; but he was terribly disconcerted.

"Listen, dear. I think a British officer is coming aboard for us. I don't know whether he has any right to take us off this ship, but I'm afraid that the law in the matter won't worry him.

"Now listen to me, dear. If I come back and knock and call to you by name, open. If somebody knocks, and there is no voice—or if it is not my voice, go to that port, open it, untie your satchel, which is hanging outside at a rope's end, take out the papers, and drop them into the sea. And not until you have done this shall you open the door to anybody."

"Yes, Kervyn."

"Then," he said, "if we've got to go back to England on a warship, we'll go clean-handed."

"Yes."

"And you had better take these passports, too." He drew them from his breast pocket. "They're forged. Throw them out with the other papers."

"Yes, I will."

"Then—I'm going. . . . Don't worry—dear. Don't tremble so, Karen—dear Karen——"

"I'll try not to. I'll not be cowardly. It—it has been a long—day. . . . I'm thinking of Anna, too. You know, if she had any papers, she was bringing them to me. That will be against me."

"I forgot that," he said, appalled. Then he squared his shoulders and forced a smile: "Anyway, whatever faces you faces us *both!* . . . Dear—keep every atom of courage you have. I shall stand by you, always. But I must go now. Do you promise me to keep up courage?"

"Yes—dear——"

They were excited, their every nerve now stretched to the breaking, yet both were striving for self-control in the instant menace of this new peril confronting them. Neither knew just what they said or did; he bent over her; she lifted her face to his, closing her eyes as his lips touched her forehead. Then he went away swiftly, and she sprang to the floor and locked the stateroom door. The next moment the awful flare of a search-light turned the room to a pit of silvery fire, and she cringed against the bed under the fierce white glory, covering her bloodless face with both hands.

On deck, the Dutch captain, who was awaiting Guild

at the companionway, came forward hastily and drew him aside.

"They've boarded us already," he said; "there comes their lieutenant over the side. Tell me, Mr. Guild, are your papers in order and your conscience clear? Can I make a fight over this affair?"

"I have no papers, but my conscience is in order. Don't let them take us if you can help it."

"You have no papers?"

"None that can help me or my wife."

"Then it's no use fighting."

"Fight all the same!" whispered Guild, as they both turned to meet the young naval officer who had just stepped aboard. He and the Dutch captain exchanged civilities stiffly, then Guild stepped forward into the lantern light.

"Kervyn Guild!" exclaimed the slim young officer in surprise. "Is it *you!*"

"Jamison!" ejaculated Guild, astonished. "Well this *is* lucky! I'm tremendously glad! I am indeed!"

They exchanged a warm impulsive hand-clasp, smiled at each other—then the quick smile on the youthful lieutenant's features altered, and his face fell.

"Guild," he said soberly, "I am afraid I shall have to inconvenience you and—your wife. I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to come aboard the *Wyvern* with me. I'm sorry; I know it must inconvenience you fearfully——"

"Jamison! We *can't* go aboard your ship! What on earth are you thinking of?"

"Orders," returned the young fellow gravely. "I've no discretion, you see."

As by common consent they had stepped aside from the group of ships' officers and, standing in the shadow of a lifeboat, they now gazed at each other very seriously.

Guild said: "There must be some mistake about this. I have no wife on board this boat."

"Did you not board this boat in company with your wife?" asked Jamison in a low voice.

"No."

"Our information is otherwise."

"Jamison, you know whether I am likely to lie to you. And I say to you on my word of honour that I did not come aboard this boat with my wife."

"Is she not on board?"

"She is not."

Jamison said regretfully: "No good, old fellow. We know she is not your wife. But we want her. I think you had better prepare her to come with us."

"Jamison, will you listen to me and believe me?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then, on my word of honour, the woman you have come to take from this ship is absolutely innocent of any—intentional—crime."

"I take your word for it, Guild."

"You can guess *my* sentiments in regard to this war, can't you?" insisted Guild.

"I think I can."

"Then listen, Jamison. I pledge you my word that

through this young girl, and through me, nothing shall ever happen that could in any manner be detrimental to your country or its allies. Don't press this matter, for God's sake!"

"Guild," he said quietly, "I believe you absolutely. But—both you and this young lady must come aboard the *Wyvern* with me. Those are my orders, old fellow. I can't go back on them; I have no discretion in this matter. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes."

After a silence, Guild linked his arm in the gold-laced arm of his old-time friend and walked back to where the captain stood fidgeting.

"I won't go, Jamison," he said, loudly but pleasantly.. "I am not obliged to go aboard your ship. Captain Vandervelde, I claim the protection of your flag for myself and for my wife."

"Captain Vandervelde knows that it means only trouble for him," said Jamison, forcing a smile. "He is not likely to defy the *Wyvern*, I think."

They all turned in the sudden glitter of the *Wyvern's* searchlight and gazed across the darkness where the unseen cruiser was playing on them from stem to stern.

"Will you come with me, Guild?" asked Jamison quietly.

"No, Jamison, I'm hanged if I do. . . . And that's too close to the truth to be very funny," he added, laughingly.

"The *Wyvern* will merely send a guard for you. It's no good bluffing, Guild. You know it yourself."

"International law is no bluff!"

"International law is merely in process of evolution just now. It's in the making. And we are making it."

"That remark is very British."

"Yes, I'm afraid it is. I'm sorry."

"Well, I won't go aboard the *Wyvern*, I tell you. I've *got* to stay on this ship! I—" he leaned over and said under his breath—"it may mean death to me, Jamison, to go aboard your ship. Not because of anything I have to fear from *your* people. On the contrary. But they'll shoot me in Germany. Can't you tell your captain I'm trustworthy?"

"What is the use, Guild?" said the young man gently. "I have my orders."

Guild looked at him, looked about him at the grave faces of the captain and the second officer, looked out across the black void of water where the long beam of the searchlight had shifted skyward, as though supplicating Heaven once more.

Only a miracle could save Karen. He knew that as he stood there, silent, with death in his heart.

And the miracle happened. For, as he stood staring at the heavenward beam of the unseen cruiser's searchlight, all at once the ship herself became grotesquely visible, tilted up oddly out of the sea in the centre of a dull reddish glow. The next instant a deadened boom sounded across the night as though from infinite depths; a shaft of fire two hundred feet high streamed skyward.

"That ship has been torpedoed! Oh, my God!" said a voice.

"The *Wyvern* has hit a mine!" roared the Dutch captain. "I'm going to get out of this *now!*"

Jamison's youthful face was marble; he swayed slightly where he stood. The next instant he was over the side like a cat, and Guild heard him hailing his boat in an agonized voice which broke with a dry, boyish sob.

From everywhere out of the blackness searchlights stretched out tremulous phantom arms toward the *Wyvern*, and their slender white beams crossed and recrossed each other, focussing on the stricken warship, which was already down by the stern, her after deck awash, and that infernal red glow surrounding her like the glow of hell around a soul in torment.

Passengers, seamen, stewards crowded and crushed him to the rail, shouting, struggling, crying out in terror or in pity.

Guild caught an officer by his gold sleeve. "We ought to stand by her," he said mechanically. "Her magazine is afire!"

"There are boats a-plenty to look after her," returned the officer; "the British destroyers are all around her like chicks about a dying hen. She's their parent ship; and there go their boats, pulling hell for sweeps! God! If it was a mine, I wish we were at Amsterdam, I do!"

The steamer was already under way; electric signals sparkled from her; signals were sparkling everywhere in the darkness around them. And all the while the cruiser with her mortal wound, enveloped in her red

aura, agonized there in the horrible sombre radiance of her own burning vitals.

Far away in the black void a ship began to fire star-shells.

As the awed throng on the moving liner's decks gazed out across the night, the doomed cruiser split slowly amidships, visibly, showing the vivid crack of her scarlet, jagged wound. For a second or two she fairly vomited hell-fire; lay there spouting it out in great crimson gouts; then she crashed skyward into incandescent fragments like a single gigantic bomb, and thunderous blackness blotted out sea and sky once more.

CHAPTER X

FORCE

HE knocked sharply at the stateroom door and called, "Karen! It is I! Open!"

She flung open the door, satchel in hand, and he entered, closed the door, relocked it, and dropped down on the lounge, staring at space.

"Kervyn! What is it?" she asked faintly, one hand against her breast.

"It is all right," he said—"as far as we are concerned—for the present, anyway. God! I can't realize it—I can't get over it——"

"What, Kervyn?" she faltered, kneeling on the lounge beside the half dazed man. "What happened? Why are you so ghastly pale? Are we really quite safe? Or are you trying to make it easier for me——"

"No; you and I are safe enough for the moment," he said. "But men are dying out yonder. The sea is full of dead men, Karen. And—I saw it all."

"I heard guns. What has happened?"

"I don't know. It was a mine perhaps, perhaps a torpedo. A ship has been blown up." He lifted his head and turned to her: "But you are not to say such

a thing to anybody—after I leave you at Trois Fontaines."

"No, Kervyn."

"Not to anybody. Not even to your father. Do you understand me, Karen?"

"No. But I won't tell anybody."

"Because," he explained wearily, "the Admiralty may have reasons for concealing it. If they mean to conceal it, this ship of ours will be stopped again and held for a while in some French or British port."

"Why?"

"So that the passengers cannot talk about what they saw tonight."

His haunted glance fell on the satchel at their feet. "As for that," he said, "I've had enough of it, and I'll take no further chances. Where are our passports?"

"Locked in with the other papers. I was all ready to throw them out of the port when you knocked."

"Unlock the bag now. I'll get rid of the whole business," he said bluntly.

"Kervyn—I can't do that."

"What?" he exclaimed.

"I can't destroy those papers if there is a chance of getting through with them. I gave my promise, you know."

The dull surprise in his eyes changed gradually to impatience.

"If another ship stops us, they'll have to go overboard, anyway."

"We may not be stopped again. If we are, we have time."

"Karen."

"Yes—dear?"

A slight flush came into his haggard face; he hesitated, looked up at her where she was kneeling on the sofa beside him. "Dear," he said gently, "I have never intended that you should carry those papers to your father, or to anybody else."

"I don't quite understand you."

"Try to understand. I am a friend to England—even a closer friend to—Belgium."

"I know. But you are *my* friend, too."

"Devotedly, Karen." He took hold of her hand; she slipped down to the sofa and settled there beside him with a little air of confidence which touched and troubled him.

"I *am* your friend," he said. "But there is another friendship that demands first of all the settlement of prior obligations. And, if these obligations conflict with any others, the others must give way, Karen."

"What do you mean?"

"The obligations of friendship—of—of affection—these must give way before a duty more imperative."

"What duty?"

"Allegiance."

"To—whom?"

"To the country in which my race had its origin."

"Yes. . . . But America is neutral, Kervyn."

"I mean—Belgium," he said in a low voice.

"Belgium! Are you then Belgian?" she asked, amazed.

"When Belgium is in trouble—yes."

"How can you be loyal to two countries?"

"By being loyal to my own manhood—and to the God who made me," he answered in a low voice.

"You feel so deeply about this war?"

"Nothing on earth could stir me as deeply, Karen. Unless—America were in danger."

"I—I can't understand."

"Let me help you. My family was Belgian. For many years we have been good and loyal Americans. America means home. But, nevertheless, we inherit obligations toward the country of our origin which, so far, time has not extinguished. . . . When I became of military age I went to Belgium and served my time in the Belgian army. Then I went—home. My father did it before me. My grandfather before him. My younger brother will do it, God willing. It is our custom to fulfill our obligations," he added with a faint smile, "even when those obligations seem to others a trifle fanciful and old-fashioned."

She bent her fair head in silence, considering for a space, her hand resting rather lifelessly in his. And, after a few moments: "But how does all this interfere with our friendship?" she asked innocently.

"It does not. . . . Only I could not let you take those papers to Germany, Karen."

"But I've promised."

"You promised to do it if it were possible." He

lifted her hand to his lips. "But—it has become impossible, Karen."

"Another ship may not interfere."

"No. But I must—interfere."

"You! *Kervyn!*"

"Dear—I *must*."

"*Betray* me?"

"Karen! Karen! What are you saying?"

"If you take my papers away you betray our friendship!"

"I have told you that there is a higher obligation than friendship. Even *your* friendship, Karen."

"You—you mean to take my papers from me?"

"Yes, dear."

"By—by *violence?*"

"Karen! Look at me!"

She gave him a white, breathless glance, wrenched her hand from his, stooped suddenly, seized the satchel, and, gathering it against her breast, clasped both arms around it. Then she looked him straight in the eyes.

"Yes," he said, "that is the only way. You must keep your word to the last and do your best. Only—remember that what I do now has no bearing whatever upon our friendship. I—I care for you—at this moment—more than I ever did. So—forgive me—Karen——"

"I never shall! Kervyn! Kervyn—think what you are doing!——"

He encircled her with his left arm, and with his right hand he gathered both of her slender wrists in his grasp

and held them. The satchel rolled from her knees to the floor.

"Kervyn!" she cried, "think what you are doing!" She looked up into his set face where he held her crushed against his shoulder. "I am your friend. Think what you are doing! I—I care—so much—for you!"

"And I for you, Karen. . . . Is that the key around your neck on that blue ribbon?"

"You shall not have it. Oh, Kervyn! Kervyn!" she gasped—"what are you doing to our friendship! What are you doing!"

The struggle was already over; with his left arm he held both of her arms pinned tightly to the supple body which lay panting against him, while with his other hand he untied the narrow blue bow-knot at her throat and freed the tiny key. Then he released her. They both were deadly pale. She dropped back among the pillows and lay there staring at him. There was in the white calm of her face an expression almost pleasant.

"So—you have done it," she said in a curiously altered voice, but her lips scarcely moved when she spoke.

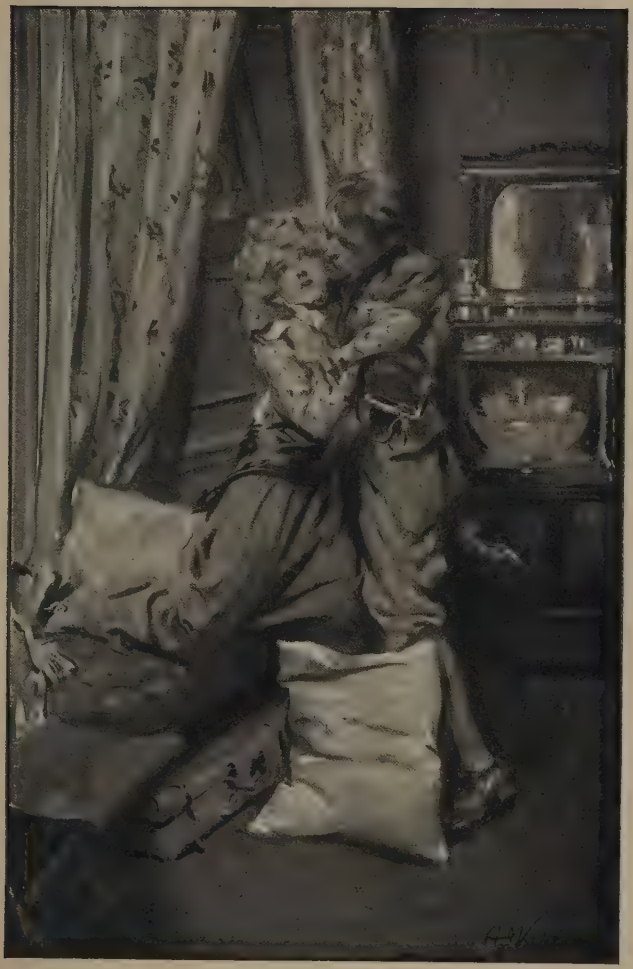
He did not answer, but in her level eyes he saw blue lightning glimmer.

"You did your best," he said. "Your conscience is clear. Nobody can reproach you."

"Do you understand," she said in a low, expressionless voice, "that I am your enemy?"

"Do you reason that way, Karen?"

"Reason?"



"'Kervyn! Kervyn—Think what you are doing!—'"

"Yes. Reason it out, Karen, before you come to such a conclusion."

She said, very quietly: "A woman takes a shorter cut to her conclusions than by reasoning. As I did with you . . . when I gave you my friendship . . . unasked—" She turned her head swiftly, and sat for a moment while the starting tears dried in her eyes, unshed. They dried slowly while the battle raged within her—combat of mind and heart with every outraged instinct in arms, every emotion, every impulse. Pride, belief, faith, tenderness — all desperately wounded, fought blindly in the assault upon her heart, seeming to tear it to a thousand bleeding fragments.

Perhaps, like the fair body of Osiris, it was immortal—a deathless, imperishable thing—or that what had come into it had become indestructible. For, after her heart lay in burning fragments within her, she turned and looked at him, and in her eyes was all the tragedy of her sex—and all its never-ending mystery to men.

"I must end what I have begun," he said gently.

"Does it matter, now?"

"I don't know, Karen. I have no choice—even when your hatred threatens me. . . . I suppose it will be that, when I unlock your satchel."

He picked it up and fitted the key to the lock. As he opened it, a faint fresh fragrance came from it, as though he was violating the delicate intimacy of this young girl herself.

But he set his jaws; she saw the cheek muscles tighten; and he drew from the satchel two flat envelopes.

One contained the forged passports, and he placed these in his breast pocket, then looked steadily at her.

"Our friendship breaks with those seals," she said unsteadily.

"Karen—I cannot help it."

"Yes, you can help it. . . . Kervyn! . . . Wait! I will—will say—that it is more than friendship that breaks—" She caught her breath and her lip quivered —"I—I have the courage to say it—if it means anything to you—if it will help——"

His face reddened, then it grew pallid and expressionless.

"Even that," he said, "must stand aside. . . . Karen, from the moment I saw you I have been—in love with you."

And, looking her steadily in the eyes, he broke the seals.

When the last seal broke she gave a little cry, turned and covered her eyes with both hands.

As for Guild, he stood with a sheet of paper in his hands, staring at the tracery which covered it and which meant absolutely nothing to him. Then he looked at the remaining sheets of paper. None had any significance to him. There were three sheets of thin translucent paper. These sheets were numbered from one to three.

The first seemed to be a hasty study from some artist's sketch book. It appeared to be a roughly executed and hasty sketch of several rather oddly shaped trees—a mere note jotted down to record the impres-

sion of the moment—trees, a foreland, a flight of little hedge birds.

On it, in English, the artist had written "Sunset."

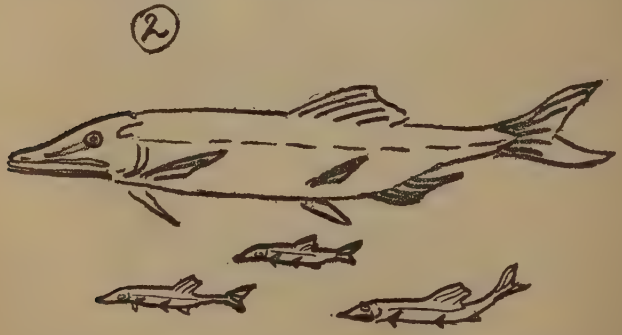
Indeed, the declining and somewhat archaic sun on the horizon and the obviously evening flight of the birds seemed to render the label unnecessary.

For a long while Guild stood studying it in the light of the stateroom ceiling lamp. And what continually arrested his attention and perplexed him was the unusual shapes of the trees and the un-birdlike flight of the birds. Also artists don't sketch on such paper.

Now and then he looked across at Karen with an inscrutable expression, and each time he looked at her his face seemed to grow more rigid and his set jaws more inflexible.

The girl crouched in the corner of the lounge, her face covered by both hands and pressed against the pillows.

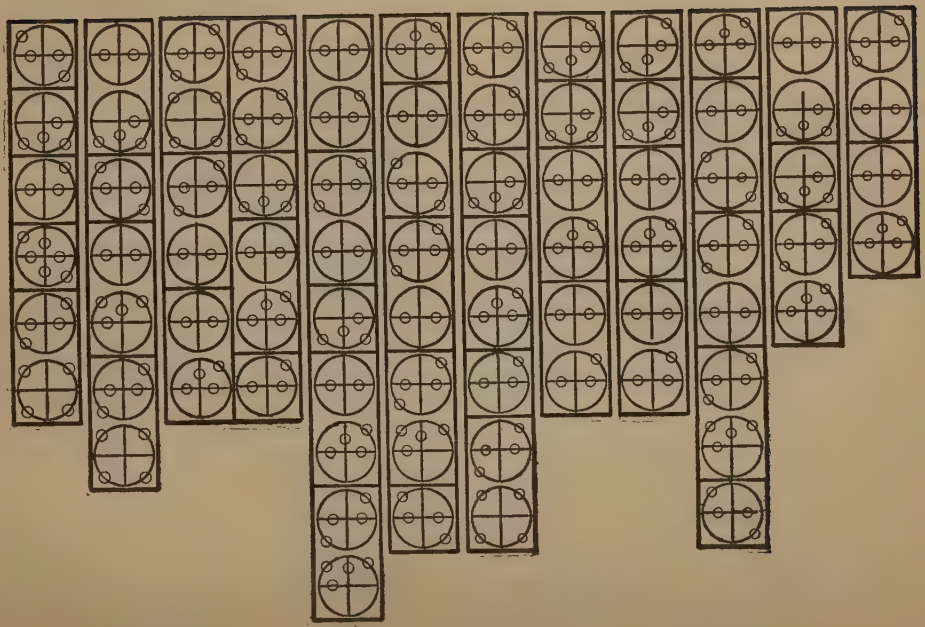
He did not speak to her. Presently he turned to the next paper. It bore the rough sketch of a fish, and was numbered 2.



It was a wretched drawing, intended, evidently, to resemble an old pike and three young ones. What it meant he had no idea. He passed to the third and last sheet of paper, and it instantly held his attention.

On it was depicted a figure, which he supposed was the artist's idea of a Japanese dancing girl. She held a fan in her left hand. Over her extended right hand a butterfly hovered.

But what interested and concentrated Guild's attention was not the very amateurish drawing, but the series of silly decorations on the paper above her head—a



number of quartered circles inclosed in squares and oblongs.

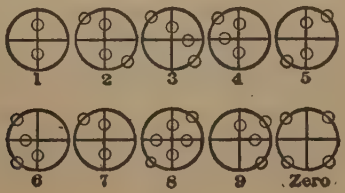
As decorations they meant nothing, indicated nothing, except that the intellect responsible for them must be a meagre one.

But as a cipher message these doubly bisected circles promised anything.

This is what Guild saw and what caused him to seat himself on the sofa beside the girl who still lay huddled over her pillows, her face hidden in her hands.

Seated, he drew out the portfolio containing his letters and a notebook. Then, slipping a lead-pencil from the leather socket and tearing out a sheet of paper, he started work—using the leather-backed book for a support—on a cipher which looked to be impossible. Yet, all ciphers are solved by the same method. And he knew it.

The first thing he did was to find his "numbers" in the mass of quartered circles. And, working steadily, swiftly, but intelligently, he had, in the course of an hour, discovered, separated and jotted down, nine of the quartered disks which he believed to represent numbers; and one extra disk which he supposed to be zero. And



he numbered each symbol accordingly: merely eliminating all lines except those bisecting the smaller circles. This gave him in order

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

The next thing to do was to find what letters those numbers, or combinations of numbers, represented.

For a while he tried English, but arrived at no convincing result. So he tried German, first making a list of the letters which were likely to occur most frequently in the written language and then trying them with the symbols which occurred most frequently in the manuscript before him.

He found that the first symbol represented the figures 21.

The twenty-first letter of the alphabet is *u*. He wrote it.

The next symbol was

for which he substituted the figures 14. The fourteenth letter of the alphabet is *n*. He had, so far, two letters, *u* and *n*, to experiment with.

He had sat for several minutes gazing absently at these two letters when, like a shot, it struck him that the French word for the number, one, was spelled *un*. Could the key of the cipher be French? He separated and jotted down the next combination of disks

which gave him the numbers 19. The nineteenth letter of the alphabet is *s*. He wrote it.

The next symbol was

or the figure 9. The ninth letter of the alphabet is *i*.

The next symbol was

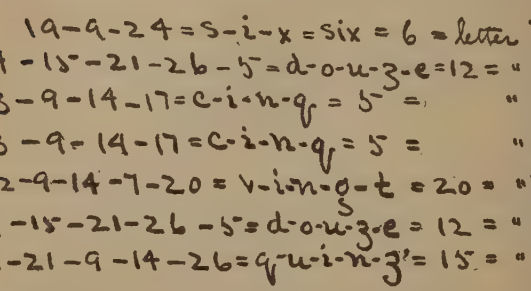
which, translated, gave him 24. The twenty-fourth letter of the alphabet is *x*.

He now had the letters *s-i-x*. And no sooner had he written them in order than the word *six* stared him in the face and he flushed with pure excitement.

He had now two words, *un* and *six*. The chances were that he was somewhere on the right track and he fell to work with a concentration and ardour which left

him oblivious to everything else—to time and place, and to the silent, motionless little figure huddled over the pillows beside him.

At the end of an hour—checked twice—but finally overcoming apparent defeat, and always following the same method of deduction, he came to an end of his



A Fragment from Guild's Notebook

symbols, and he found the leaf from his notebook was covered with the following words in order of symbol:

Un, six douze cinq cinq vingt, douze quinz' vingt-un sept eight, nineteen vingt trois nine douze

douze twenty-five, eight cinq trois eight vingt, six quinze douze douze quinze vingt-trois, deux nine eighteen quatre nineteen.

For these numerals spelled out capriciously in either abbreviated French or English he substituted numbers in the sequence given:

"1—6—12—5—5—20—12—15—21—7—8—19
—23—9—12—12—25—8—5—3—8—20—6—15
—12—12—15—23—2—9—18—4—19.

Then for the figure 1 he wrote the first letter of the alphabet—*A*. For the number six he wrote the sixth letter of the alphabet *F*. For the number 12, the twelfth letter of the alphabet *L*.

And when he had written letters for every figure in order given he had on his sheet of paper

A FLEETLOUGHSWILLYHECHTFOLLOW
BIRDS

After a while he separated the words *A*, *Fleet*, *Follow*, and *Birds*, leaving the unintelligible sequence of letters LOUGHSWILLYHECHT.

Out of this, for a long while, he could make nothing, until, by chance, taking the last five letters together, it suddenly occurred to him that the German word for pike was HECHT. Then, in a flash, he remembered the badly drawn picture of a pike and its young. Pike or Hecht, that was one of the words in all probability. But what *other* word the word Hecht represented he could not imagine.

He looked at his notebook again. The letters remaining were LOUGHSWILLY. They meant absolutely nothing in any language he had even heard of. He studied what he already had—A Fleet (Blank) Pike Follow Birds. A *pike* follow *Birds*—*birds*—and swift as lightning a thought struck him which set him tingling to his finger-tips: somewhere in that rough, hasty, and apparently innocent sketch in which oddly shaped trees and a line of little birds figured, lay the key to the whole thing.

He felt it, he *knew* it. He spread out the drawing on his knees and studied it with terrible concentration, conscious somehow or other that something about it, something *in* it, was vaguely familiar to him. *What?* Had he ever before seen another sketch by the same hand? He could not recollect. It was like millions of rough, hasty sketches jotted down by painters as notes for their own guidance only and not for others to see.

What was there about it unusual? The trees? The *shapes* of the trees. Ah! he was getting nearer the goal—he realized it, felt it, and, balked, fell into a mental rage for a moment.

Then his habitual self-command returned; he squared his jaws, gazed grimly at the trees, and forced himself once more to answer his own questions.

The shapes of the trees, then, were unusual. He had gotten that far. What was unusual in their shapes? The trunks and branches? No. The foliage. No. The outline!

"God!" he whispered. And he had it.

Over the sofa was hanging a map of the British Isles and of the Western coast of Europe. Dotted lines indicated the course taken by the Holland Line steamers. He reached up, unhooked it, looked at it, then at the drawing in his hand.

Then he detached half of the thin sheet of paper on which the sketch was drawn and laid it over the sketch. Being translucent to the verge of transparency, he could see the drawing beneath the thin sheet covering it.

Then, with his pencil, he steadily traced the *outlines* of the trees.

When he had done this and had removed the sketch from beneath his tracing-paper he had what he expected—an *outline* of the British Isles, the Hebrides, Orkneys, Shetlands; part of the coast of Norway, the French, Belgian and Dutch coast. Heligoland, and the German coast at Cuxhaven and Wilhelmshaven.

From the map of the steamship company he carefully filled in boundaries and a few principal towns, then placing his outline drawing over the sketch of the trees he drew a dotted line following exactly the flight of the little birds.

Where that flight terminated he made an arrow, then turned his eyes on the steamer map to find out where that arrow's point rested.

And there on the Irish coast he saw the name Lough Swilly!

It was the last link!—the last but one.

"A Fleet Lough Swilly. Hecht (Pike) follow birds."

A pike, with little pike following her, was to follow

the flight of the birds—the dotted line on his outline map. The dotted line curved up out of Cuxhaven, around the Orkneys and Hebrides and into Lough Swilly—*where there was a fleet!*

Out of Cuxhaven—*Cuxhaven!* where lay the German submarines!—A pike, and young! A parent ship and submarines!

The last link was forged; the chain complete—not quite—not entirely. The Japanese dancing girl? And

under the number of the sketch, 3,—were three symbols. They were junks with latten sails.

Perhaps there were three Japanese battleships at Lough Swilly. It didn't matter; the chain was complete enough for him.

CHAPTER XI

STRATEGY

AS he rose from the sofa, stretching his arms to ease his cramped muscles, Guild became conscious that he was very tired.

He had had little sleep the night before and none at all this night. He glanced at his watch; it was four o'clock in the morning. He went to the port, unscrewed it, and looked out into pitch darkness. There was not a light to be seen on the sea, no flare from any headland, no spark which might indicate a lighthouse, not a star overhead, not a sparkle save for the splintered reflection of the vessel's own lights running over the water alongside, through which foaming, curling waves raced and fled away into the black obscurity astern.

He turned and looked gravely at Karen. The girl still lay unstirring among the pillows on the sofa. One arm covered her head as though to shield it from some blow.

He bent beside her, listening to her breathing. It was quiet and regular, and on her cheek was a flush like the delicate colour of a sleeping child.

He had no mind to disturb her, yet he could not make her more comfortable without awaking her.

All he dared do was to unbutton her spats very cautiously, and slip off the little brown suede shoes.

Over her he laid the blankets from the bed, lightly, then opened wide the port.

His own toilet for the night was even simpler; he folded together the batch of damning papers, originals, his own notes, the forged passports, strapped them with an elastic band, buttoned them inside his breast pocket, reached over and extinguished the electric globe, and, fully dressed, lay down on the stripped bed in darkness.

They had been traveling sixteen hours. Allowing for their detention by the ill-omened *Wyvern*, they should dock at Amsterdam in five or six hours more.

He tried to sleep; but his nerves were very much alive and his excited brain refused to subscribe to the body's fatigue.

All that had happened since he first saw Karen Girard he now went over and over in his mind in spite of himself. He strove to stop thinking, and could not; and sometimes the lurid horror of the *Wyvern* possessed him with all its appalling details made plain to his imagination—details not visible from the liner's decks, yet perhaps the more ghastly because hidden by distance and by the infernal glare that fringed the doomed ship like a very nimbus from hell itself.

This obsessed him, and the villainous information which he had wrested from the papers which this young girl had been carrying—information amply sufficient to

convict her and to make inevitable the military execution of the man Grätz and the grinning chauffeur, Bush.

And if the wretched maid, Anna, had been arrested with papers similar to these on her person, her case, too, was hopeless. Because the very existence of England depended upon extinguishing forever people who dealt in secret information like that which lay folded and buttoned under his belted coat of tweed.

He knew it, knew what his fate must have been had the satchel been searched on Fresh Wharf—knew what Karen's fate must have been, also, surely, surely!

And had those papers been taken aboard the *Wyvern* it had not been very long before the simplicity of the cipher had been discovered by anybody trained in code work.

For, in spite of its surface complexity, the cipher was a singularly simple one, even a stupid code, based on simple principles long known and understood in all of their hundreds of variations.

And all such ciphers, granted time and patience, could be solved by the same basic principles. The only function of that kind of code was to so multiply its intricacies and variations that, with a time limit for delivery understood, measures could be taken at the other end to minimize the effect of discovery, the elapsing of the time limit serving as an automatic warning that message or messenger were under forcible detention within the enemy's lines.

Yes, it had been a stupid cipher, and an easy one.

A trained man would have solved it in half the time he had required.

Nothing about the message remained really obscure except the Japanese dancing girl playing with her butterfly and fan, and the lack of information concerning the "fleet" at anchor or cruising near "Lough Swilly" on the Irish coast.

As far as the fleet was concerned, Guild was very confident that he understood. The whereabouts of the British battleship fleet was not known, had been carefully guarded. Without a doubt Lough Swilly was its rendezvous; and the German spy system in England had discovered it and was sending the information to Berlin with a suggestion that submarines "follow the birds," i. e., take that dotted course around the northern Scottish coast, slip south into Lough Swilly, and attack the first line of battle squadron where it had been supposed to lurk in safety, awaiting its call to action. That was as clear as daylight, but the Japanese figure he could not understand.

He was utterly unable to sleep. After an hour's staring into the darkness he rose cautiously, opened the stateroom door and stepped into the lighted corridor.

Here he lighted a cigarette against regulations and began to pace up and down.

Presently the sharp nose of a steward detected the aroma of tobacco, and he came prowling into the corridor.

So Guild nodded and tossed the cigarette out of the open port at the end of the corridor.

"We ought to dock by nine," he said.

"About nine, sir."

"We're lucky to have run afoul of nothing resembling a mine."

"God, sir! Wasn't it awful about the *Wyvern!* I expect some passenger steamer will get it yet. Mines by the hundreds are coming ashore on the coast of Holland."

"Have you had any news by wireless?" asked Guild.

"A little, sir. They've been fighting all night south of Ostend. Also, we had a wire from London that a German light cruiser, the *Schmetterling*, is at Valparaiso, and that a Japanese cruiser, the *Geisha*, and a French one, the *Eventail*, have been ordered after her."

Guild nodded carelessly, stretched his arms, yawned, and returned to the stateroom, knowing that now, at last, he was in possession of every item in the secret document.

For the Japanese dancing girl was the *Geisha*, the fan in her hand was the French cruiser *Eventail* and the butterfly fluttering about her was the German light cruiser *Schmetterling*—which in that agreeable language means "butterfly," and which no doubt had made an attempt upon the *Geisha* and had been repulsed.

And this warning was sent that the *Schmetterling* had better keep her distance, because the *Eventail* had now joined the Japanese ship, and the two meant mischief.

As for the drawing of the Pike, perhaps on the German naval list there might have been a vessel named the *Hecht*. He did not know. The symbol of the most ferocious fresh-water fish in Europe was sufficient to indicate the nature of the craft even had the flight of the "birds" not made it unmistakable. There could be no doubt about it that the Hecht with the three little Hechts following had been explicitly invited to cruise in the North Sea and have a look-in at Lough Swilly. And that was quite enough to understand.

He turned on the cabin light, went to Karen's side and looked at her.

She had moved, but only in her sleep apparently. The back of one hand lay across her forehead; her face was turned upward, and on the flushed cheeks there were traces of tears.

But she still slept. He arranged her coverings again, stood gazing at her for a moment more, then he extinguished the light and once more lay down on the bare mattress, using his arm for a pillow.

But sleep eluded him for all his desperate weariness. He thought of Grätz and of Bush and of the wretched woman involved by them and now a prisoner.

The moment he turned over these papers to the British Consul in Amsterdam the death warrant of Grätz and Bush was signed. He knew that. He knew also that the papers in his possession were going to be delivered to British authority. But first he meant to give Grätz and Bush a sporting chance to clear out.

Not because they had aided him. They cared nothing about him. It was Karen they had aided, and their help was given to her because of von Reiter.

No, it was not in him to do the thing that way. Had he been a British officer on duty it had been hard enough to do such a thing.

As it was he must give them their chance and he knew of only one way to do it. This point settled he dismissed it from his mind and, with a slight sigh, permitted his harassed thoughts to lead him where they seemed always now inclined to lead him when permitted—back to the young girl he had known only a few hours, but in whose company it seemed to him that he had already lived a century.

He was not a man given to easy friendships, not a man in whom sensations were easily stirred. Under ordinary circumstances, perhaps, neither the youthful beauty of this girl, nor her talents and accomplishments had stirred him to more than an amiably impersonal interest. He had known many women and had been friends with a few. But on his part the friendships had not been sentimental.

Women of all sorts and conditions he had known: fashionable idlers, professional women, domesticated women; women with ideas, women without them, busy women with leisure for mischief, mischievous women whose business was leisure, happy women, unhappy ones, calm ones, restless ones, clever ones, stupid ones and their even more irritating sisters who promised to amount to something and never did, all these varieties

of the species he had known, but never a woman like this.

Usually he could place a woman after seeing her move and hearing her speak. He could only place Karen on a social par with any woman he had ever known, and he was afraid she didn't belong there, because well-born German Mädchens don't interne themselves in nun-like seclusion far from Vaterland, Vater, and maternal apron-strings, with intervals of sallying forth into the world for a few months' diversion as a professional actress on the stage.

At least Guild had never heard of any girls who did such things. But there remained the chance, of course, that Karen Girard was a perfectly new type to him.

One fact was evident; her father was a Prussian officer and belonged to the Prussian aristocracy. But gentlemen of these castes do not permit their daughters the freedom that Karen enjoyed.

There was a mystery about the matter, probably not an agreeable one. Antecedents, conditions and facts did not agree. There was no logic in her situation.

Guild realized this. And at the same time he realized that he had never liked any woman as much—had never come to care for any woman as easily, as naturally, and as quickly as he had come to care for Karen Girard.

It stirred him now to remember that this young girl had responded, frankly, fearlessly, naturally; had even met him more than half-way with a sweet sincerity and confidence that touched him again as he thought of it.

Truly he had never looked into such honest eyes, or into lovelier ones,—two clear, violet wells of light. And

Truth, who abides in wells, could not have chosen for her dwelling place habitations more suitable.

She seemed to possess all qualities as well as all accomplishments and graces of mind and body. The quality of courage was hers—a courage adorable in its femininity. But there was nothing hard about it, only firmness—like the white firmness of her skin. And her intuitive generosity was as quick and melting as the exquisite motives which prompted it.

Never could he forget that in the dreadful peril of the moment, she had tried to give him a chance to escape the consequences of his companionship with her,—had tried to send him ashore at the last moment so that she alone might remain to face whatever there was confronting her.

It was a brave thing to do, generous, self-forgetful, merciful, and finely just. For though she had not tried to deceive him she had gradually realized that she herself might be deceived, and that she was in honour bound to warn him concerning her suspicions of the satchel's contents.

And now—in the end—and after danger was practically over, how did they stand, he and she? How had they emerged from the snarl of circumstances?

Had his gentle violence killed forever a very wonderful beginning of what they both had spoken of as friendship? And she—he reddened in the darkness as he remembered—she had begged him in the name of friendship not to violate it—had spoken of it, in the excitement of emotion, as *more* than friendship.

It had been the most difficult thing he ever had had to do.

Was it true that her friendship had turned to hatred?

He wondered, wondered at the dull unhappiness which the thought brought with it. And, wondering, fell asleep.

In the grey of dawn Karen sat up, wide-eyed, still tremulous from the dream of death that had awakened her.

Through the open port a grey sky glimmered. She rose to her knees and gazed out upon a grey waste of water heaving to the horizon.

Then she turned and looked across at the bed where Guild lay, his blond head cradled on one arm, asleep.

Her eyes rested on him a long while. Then she caught sight of her shoes and spats on the floor—looked down at the blankets and covers that had kept her warm. The next moment her eyes fell on her satchel where it stood open, the key still in the lock, and her silver toilet articles glimmering dully inside.

The vague tenderness in her blue eyes vanished; *he* had done *this*, too!—shamefully, by force, treading mercilessly on the frail bud of friendship—ignoring everything, sacrificing everything to a dull, obstinate determination which he had characterized as duty.

She turned and looked at the man who had done all this, her eyes darkly beautiful, her lips stern.

Duty? He had not considered the duty she owed. He had not respected her promise to bring back what

had been intrusted to her. And when the discussion had tired him—when her warnings, pleadings—even her appeals in the name of the first friendship she had ever given—had been ignored, he had coolly used violence.

Yes, violence, although, perhaps, the violence had not been very violent. But it was force—and hateful to her who never before had been obliged to endure the arrogance which her caste only knew how to dispense.

"So brauch' Ich Gewalt!" kept ringing in her ears like a very obsession as she knelt there, sitting back on her own supple limbs, and watching the sleeping man out of beautiful hostile eyes.

That man! That *American*—or Belgian—whatever he was—with his clear grey eyes and his short yellow hair and that mouth of his which could be faintly humorous at times and, at times be so ugly and set—what was there about him that she liked—or rather *had* liked?

Not his features; they were only passable from an ornamental point of view—not his lean but powerful figure, which resembled many other figures she had seen in England—not his manner particularly—at least she had seen more deferential attitudes, more polish of the courtly and continental sort, more empressement.

What was it she liked,—had *once* liked in this man? Nothing! *Nothing!*—the tears suddenly glimmered in her eyes and she winked them dry, angrily.

And to think—to remember in years to come that she—*she* had pleaded with that man in the name of friendship—and of something *more* than friendship!—

The hot colour mantled face and throat and she covered her eyes in a sudden agony of mortification.

For a few moments she remained so, then her hands fell, helplessly again.

And, as she knelt there looking at him through the increasing daylight, suddenly her eyes narrowed, and her set face grew still and intent.

Crowding out of the shallow breast pocket of his Norfolk where he lay were papers. *Her* papers!

The next instant, lithely, softly, soundlessly on her unshod feet, she had slipped from the lounge and crossed the stateroom to his side, and her fingers already touched the edges of the packet.

Her papers! And her hand rested on them. But she did not take them. There was something about the stealth of the act that checked her,—something that seemed foreign, repugnant to her nature.

Breathless, her narrow hand poised, she hesitated, trying to remember that the papers were hers—striving to aid herself with the hot and shameful memory of the violence he had offered her.

Why couldn't she take them? This man and she were now at war! War has two phases, violence and strategy. Both are legitimate; he had played his part, and this part was strategy. Why shouldn't she play that part? Why?

But her hand wavered, fell away, and she looked down into his sleeping face and knew that she could not do it.

After a moment his eyes opened and met hers, pleasantly.

She blushed to her hair.

He said: "Why didn't you take them, Karen?"

"You couldn't understand if I told you," she said with youthful bitterness.

He looked very grave at that. She turned, picked up shoes and spats, and seated herself on the sofa.

So he got up, opened the door and went up on deck, leaving her the stateroom to herself.

At the office of the wireless station the operator seemed to have no objection to sending a message for him to the British Consul in Amsterdam, and obligingly looked up the address. So Guild sent his message and prepaid reply.

Then he went into the smoking-room and lit a cigarette.

He was dozing when a steward awoke him with a reply to his wireless message:

> Kervyn Guild
> On board S. S. *Feyenoord*
> Will call at American Consulate. Many thanks.
> CHURCHILL, Consul.

He sat thinking for a few minutes. Then remembering that he did not know where the American Consul was to be found, he went again to the wireless office and procured the address.

Turning, as he was leaving, to thank the boyish operator, he found that youth's shrewd eyes fixed on him intently.

"Look out, sir," said the operator, in perfectly good

English. "There's a lot o' talk about you on board."

"What do you mean?"

"Wasn't it you the *Wyvern* was wanting?"

"Yes."

"You're friendly to us, I take it?"

"Do you mean to England?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, I am."

"I fancied so. Be very careful aboard this boat, sir. Half the crew and most of the stewards are German."

"Thanks," said Guild smilingly.

But as he walked slowly away he realized rather uneasily what an object of interest he had become to the personnel of the ship since the *Wyvern* had honoured him by her wireless inquiries concerning him.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE RAIN

HE went straight to the writing-room. Only one or two of his fellow-passengers were up, and he had the place to himself.

He wrote first:

W. A. Churchill, Esquire,
British Consulate,
Plantage Middenlaan 20,
Amsterdam,
Holland

SIR:

The following items of information should be immediately transmitted to your home Government. The importance of the matters in question admit of no delay.

1st. It has come to my knowledge that German spies in England have discovered the whereabouts of a British fleet—presumably the first line battle fleet—and have attempted to communicate the intelligence to Berlin. One document in cipher embodying this intelligence has been intercepted and translated. But other communications in cipher may get through.

2d. Another document of the same sort advises the Berlin Government to send from Cuxhaven a cruiser (parent ship) as convoy to three submarines for the purpose of attacking the British armoured ships.

The rendezvous of the British ships, as given in the cipher message, is Lough Swilly, North Irish coast.

The route suggested for the German cruiser and submarines is around the north coast of Scotland.

3d. Still a third document in cipher informs the German Government that the light cruiser, *Schmetterling*, at or off Valparaiso, is being pursued by the Japanese ship *Geisha* and the French gunboat *Eventail.*

4th. The fourth and last item of information to be transmitted to your Government concerns an actuality witnessed by myself and by the majority of the passengers of this steamer, now docking at Rotterdam.

Last night, somewhere between eleven o'clock and midnight, and somewhere off the Belgian coast, H. M. S. *Wyvern* was blown up, whether by mine or torpedo or by a bomb from some unseen air-craft I do not know. She was using her searchlight on the clouds at the time.

The ship was tilted out of the water at an odd angle when the red glare that suddenly enveloped her made her visible. It appears to me as though some submarine convulsion had heaved her up out of the sea.

There was one of her officers aboard our liner

when the catastrophe occurred—Lieutenant Jamison. A boat's crew lay alongside of us. With these exceptions it does not seem probable that anybody aboard the *Wyvern* could have escaped death, although other ships were in the vicinity and their searchlights played upon her, and I saw small boats on the way to her before she finally blew to pieces.

This is the information which both duty and inclination impel me to place at the disposal of the British Government.

Permit me to add that I am leaving in the hands of the United States consul, Henry H. Morgan, Esquire, a separate packet of papers containing full corroboration of the foregoing details.

The packet is addressed to you in his care, but he will be instructed to give you this letter, only, and not to deliver the packet to you until a week from today for reasons which I cannot explain.

The packet contains—

1st. Three pages of cipher and pictographs employed by the German spy system in London.

2d. A key to the cipher.

3d. A key to the pictographs.

4th. A full translation of the cipher.

5th. A translation of the pictographs.

6th. A map.

The German personage to whom the packet was originally addressed, the names and addresses of those who sent it from London, the circumstances under which it was intercepted, will be written out with what detail is necessary, and will be

contained in the packet with the original cipher.

In one week from today the American Consul, Mr. Morgan, will deliver to you this packet, but under no circumstances is it to be delivered before a week from today.

I have the honour to be, sir, with great respect,

Your obt. serv't,

KERVYN GUILD.

Union square, New York.

This letter he sealed, addressed, and laid aside.

He then wrote to the American Consulate, addressing the note to the Consul and Vice-Consul, saying that he committed to their care—

1st. A letter to be called for immediately by the British Consul in person, and so marked.

2d. A packet addressed to the British Consul, but not to be delivered until a week had expired.

3d. A letter to be sent to the United States Consul General in London with all speed.

4th. A telegram to be sent to Edmeston Automobile Agency in London.

5th. A letter to the same agency.

He then wrote out his telegram, wondering whether the United States Consul could put it through:

Edmeston Agency,
White Hood Lane,
London, E. C.

Business of instant importance requires you all to leave for Holland immediately. Lose no time.

Signed—RIDER.

Holland Line S. S. *Feyenoord.*

The letter was directed to the Edmeston Agency:

DEAR SIRS:

Grätz and Bush must leave at once if they wish to enjoy the fishing here. The *pike* are biting. *Four have been caught. The shooting, also, is excellent. Eight birds were killed yesterday.* If Grätz and Bush do not leave within a week business in London is likely to detain them indefinitely and they will miss their holiday with little chance for another.

Tell them to take the urgent advice of a sportsman and clear out while they have the chance.

Yours with good intentions,

D. BROWN SATCHELL.

While Guild was busy writing and consigning what he had written to separate envelopes, he was aware of considerable movement and noise outside on deck—the passing to and fro of many people, whistle blasts from other craft—in fact, all the various species of bustle and noise which, aboard any steamer, indicate its approach to port.

He raised his head and tried to see, but it was still raining and the air was dull with fog.

Passengers, stewards, and officers came and went, passing through the writing-room where he sat in a corner sorting and sealing his letters. Twice, glancing up over his shoulder, he noticed a steward cleaning up, dusting and arranging the pens, ink, and writing paper on the several tables near by—one of those too

busy and officious functionaries whose zeal for tips usually defeats its own ends.

And so it happened this time, for, as Guild, intent on what he was writing, reached out absently for another envelope, a package of them was thrust into his hand with a bustling, obsequious—"Paper, sir! Yes, sir"—Beg pardon, sir! I'm sorry!"—For somehow the inkwell had been upset and the pile of letters scattered over the floor.

"Damn it!" said Guild savagely, springing back to avoid the streaming ink.

The steward appeared to be overwhelmed; down he flopped on his knees to collect the letters, hopping up at intervals to sop the flowing flood of ink from the desk.

Guild took the letters from him grimly, counted the sealed envelopes, then without a word went to the neighbouring desk, and, sitting down there, wrote on the last sealed envelope not yet addressed—the envelope which contained the cipher code, translation, and the information concerning the Edmeston Company. When he had written on it: "To be delivered to the British Consul in a week," he gathered all the letters, placed them in his breast pocket, buttoned his coat, and went out. For half an hour he walked to and fro under the shelter of the roofed deck, glancing absently across the rail where there was nothing to see except grey mist, grey water, and rain.

After he had enough of this he went below.

Karen was not in the cabin, but her luggage stood there beside his own.

He had plenty of time to make a decent toilet; he bathed, shaved, chose fresh linen, brushed his wrinkled tweeds as thoroughly as he could, then, leaving the luggage there he went away in search of Karen with a view to breakfast.

He found her on the starboard deck very comfortably established. The idiot deck steward who had upset his ink-well and scattered his letters was serving her obsequiously with marmalade.

As Guild approached Karen looked up at him coolly enough, though a bright colour surged into her face. The steward bustled away to find more coffee and rolls.

"Do you feel rested at all?" asked Guild pleasantly.

"Yes, thank you."

"May I take the next chair and have breakfast with you?"

"Yes, please."

He seated himself. She said nothing, ate nothing. Suddenly it occurred to him that in her quaint way she was waiting for his breakfast to appear before beginning her own.

"You are not waiting for me, are you?" he asked. "Don't do that; everything will be cold."

With an odd air of old-fashioned obedience, which always seemed to make her more youthful to him, she began her breakfast.

"We'll be docking presently," he remarked, glancing out into the fog and thinly falling rain.

"Yes."

He lay back in his chair, not caring for her mono-

syllables, but good-humouredly receptive in case she encouraged conversation.

Neither the freshness of her clothes nor of her skin seemed to have suffered from the discomforts of the night; her hair was lustrous and crisply in order. From her hat-crown to the palms of her gloves rolled back over her wrists, she seemed to have just left the hands of a clever maid, so fresh, sweet, fragrant and immaculate she appeared to him, and he became uncomfortably conscious of his knickerbockers and badly wrinkled tweeds.

The same fool of a steward brought his coffee. And as Karen offered no encouragement to conversation he breakfasted beside her in silence.

Afterward he lighted a cigarette, and they both lay back on their steamer chairs watching the fog and the drizzle and the promenading passengers who all appeared to be excited at the approaching process of docking and over the terrible episode of the previous night.

In all languages it was being discussed; Guild could catch fragments of conversation as groups formed, passed, and repassed their chairs.

Another thing was plain to him; Karen had absolutely nothing to say to him, and apparently no further interest in him.

From time to time he looked at the pure profile which never turned in response. Self-possessed, serene, the girl gazed out into the fog as though she were quite alone on deck. Nor did there seem to be any effort in her detached interest from her environment. And Guild

wondered in his depressed heart whether he had utterly and hopelessly killed in her the last faint glimmer of friendly interest in him.

The docking of the *Feyenoord* in the fog interested him very little; here and there a swaying mast or a black and red funnel loomed up in the fog, and the air was full of characteristic noises—that is all he saw or heard where he lay silent, brooding on fate and chance and on the ways of a woman in the pride of her youth.

The idiot steward reappeared and Guild sent him below for their luggage.

On the gang-plank they descended with the throng, shoulder to shoulder in silence. Inspection did not take long; then a porter who had been following took their luggage.

"Karen, do you speak Dutch?" asked Guild, mischievously.

"Yes—a little."

"I supposed you did," he said smilingly. "Please ask him the shortest way to the United States Consulate."

She turned indifferently to the porter: "Wat is de Kortste weg naar——"

She hesitated, then with a dainty malice indescribable—"—Naar the Yankee Consulate?" she added calmly.

Guild reddened and strolled a few steps forward, thoroughly incensed.

The porter smothered a smile: "Mejuffrouw—" he

began, "ga recht uit links, en den de derde Straat rechts——"

"Hoe ver is het?"

The porter glanced sideways and cunningly after Guild, then sank his voice: "Freule—" he began, but the girl's haughty amazement silenced him. He touched his cap and muttered in English: "Madam is known to me. The chain is long from London to Trois Fontaines. I am only another link in that chain—at madam's service."

"I *am* served—sufficiently. Find a motor cab and tell the driver to take us to the United States Consulate."

The porter's visage expressed sullen curiosity: "Why," he asked in German, "does the gracious, well-born young lady desire to visit the *American* Consulate when the German Consulate is possibly expecting her?"

At that she straightened up, staring at the man out of coldly insolent eyes.

"That is enough," she said. "Take our luggage to a motor cab."

"To the Yankee Consulate?"

"*To the Consulate of the United States!* Do you hear? Move, then!" she said crisply.

It was raining torrents; Guild held the sullen porter's umbrella while Karen entered the cab; the luggage was stowed, the vehicle wheeled out into rain-shot obscurity.

Karen turned impulsively to the man beside her: "Forgive my rudeness; I am ashamed to have insulted your Consulate."

He flushed, but his lips twitched humorously; "I am sure that the United States very freely forgives Fräulein Girard."

"Do *you?*"

"Does it matter?" he asked lightly.

"Yes. Are my amends acceptable to *you?*"

"Of course. But what am I—Karen——"

"You are—amiable. It was very common of me."

"It might have been rather common in anybody else. You couldn't be *that.* Somehow," he added, smiling, "as we say in America, you seem to get away with it, Karen."

"You are very—amiable," she repeated stiffly.

And constraint fell between them once more, leaving him, however, faintly amused. She *could* be such a *little* girl at times. And she was adorable in the rôle, though she scarcely suspected it.

At the American Consulate the cab stopped and Guild turned up his coat collar and sprang out.

While he was absent the girl lay back in her corner, her eyes fixed on the rain-smeared pane. She had remained so motionless for some time when a tapping at the cabin window attracted her attention. A beggar had came to the street side of the cab and was standing there, the rain beating on his upturned face. And the girl hastily drew out her purse and let down the window.

Suddenly she became rigid; the beggar had said something to her under his breath. The English shilling fell from her fingers to the floor of the cab.

His hand still extended in supplication, the man went on in German:

"Your steamer swarmed with English spies. One of them was your stewardess."

The girl's lips parted, stiffly: "I don't understand," she said with an effort.

"The stewardess spied on the deck steward, Ridder. They were all watching each other on that ship. And everybody watched you and the American. Ridder told me to follow you to the American Consulate."

"Who are *you?*"

"I served as one of the waiters in the saloon. Grätz knows me. If you are carrying any papers of value be careful."

"What do you mean?"

"Ridder gave you some papers. The stewardess saw him. She came ashore and watched you while your luggage was being inspected. She knows you have driven to the American Consulate. Your porter told her—the fool! Do you know what she is up to?"

"I—I can—guess. I think you had better go—quick!" she added as the Consulate door opened and Guild came out. And she fumbled in her purse for a coin, thrust it hastily through the window, and turned in confusion to meet the young man's sternly questioning eyes.

"What are you doing?" he asked bluntly.

"A man—begging."

"For what, Karen? For money or information?"

The girl winced and avoided his gaze. The cab

wheeled in a short circle and moved off through the rain again.

"Which was it he wanted, Karen?" repeated Guild quietly. "Was it money or—something else he wanted?"

"Does—it—concern you?" she stammered.

"Yes. Because I have just learned over the Consulate telephone that German agents are now attempting to do what you refrained from doing last night."

"What?"

"Steal the papers I had of you."

"Do you mean the papers you *stole?*"

"I mean the papers I took by highway robbery. There is a difference," he added. "But both are robbery, and I thought *you* were above such things."

"I am!" she said, flushing.

"No, you are not!" he retorted sternly. "What you were too fastidious to do for yourself last night—take the papers when you thought I was asleep—you had done for you this morning by a steward!"

"I did *not!*"

"Why do you deny it? What do you mean? Don't you know that while I was busy in the writing-room a steward upset my ink, scattered my papers, stole the envelope containing the papers I took from you, and left me a sealed envelope full of tissue paper?"

"It isn't true!"

"It is true."

"How do you know?"

"Your stewardess told me over the telephone a few moments ago. Karen, you are untruthful!"

She caught her breath; the tears flushed in her eyes:

"I am *not* untruthful! It does look like it but I am not! I did not know that the deck steward had robbed you. He came to my door and gave me the papers, saying that he had picked them up in the corridor outside our—my—door! I did not engage anybody to steal them—if it *is* stealing to recover—my own—property——"

"That deck steward is a spy, but I don't understand how he could have known that I had taken the papers from you."

"I don't know either," she said excitedly. "But everybody knew everything on board that ship. It was a nest of spies."

His grim features relaxed. "I'm sorry I charged you with untruth, Karen. I never shall again. But—what was I to think?"

"When I tell you a thing—*that* is what you are to think," she said crisply.

"Yes . . . I realize that now. I am sorry. May I ask your forgiveness?"

"Yes—please."

"Then—I do ask it."

"Accorded."

"May I ask a little more?" he continued.

"What?"

"May I ask you to tell me what you did with those papers after the deck steward gave them to you?"

"I shall not tell you."

"Then I am afraid that I shall have to tell you how

you disposed of those papers. You first went to the stewardess and borrowed a needle and thread and then asked permission to sit in her room and do a little necessary sewing——"

The girl blushed hotly: "The contemptible creature!" she exclaimed.

"A little sewing," repeated Guild, coolly. "And," he continued, "you sewed those papers to your clothing. The stewardess saw you do it."

"Very well! Suppose I did."

"You have them on you now."

"And then?"

"Why it was a silly thing to do, Karen."

"Silly? Why?"

"Because," he said calmly, "I must have them, and it makes it more awkward for us both than if you had merely put them back into your satchel."

"You—you intend—to——" Her amazement checked her, then flashed out into wrath.

"Do you know," she said, "that you are becoming impudent?"

"Karen," he retorted very quietly, "a man of my sort isn't *impudent*. But, possibly, he might be *insolent*—if he chooses. And perhaps I shall choose."

Checked, her lips still quivering, the girl, despite her anger, understood what he meant—knew that she was confronting a man of her own caste, where insolence indeed might happen, but nothing more plebeian.

"I—spoke to you as though you were an American," she said slowly. "I forgot——"

"I am answering you as an American!" he interrupted drily. "Make no mistake about that country; it breeds plenty of men who have every right to answer you as I do!"

She bit her lip; her eyes filled and she averted her face. Presently the cab stopped.

"We're at the station," he said briefly.

Whether Guild had paid for the entire compartment or whether it happened so she did not inquire, but they had the place to themselves, so far.

Guild paid no further attention to her except to lay a couple of Tauchnitz novels beside her on the seat. After that he opened a newspaper which he had brought away with him from the Consulate, and began to read it without troubling to ask her permission.

As the paper hid his perfectly expressionless face she ventured to glance at it from time to time. It was the *New York Herald* and on the sheet turned toward her she was perfectly able to read something that interested her and sent faint shivers creeping over her as she ended it:

PASSPORT REFORM STIRS AMERICANS ABROAD AND DEALS HARD BLOW TO SPIES

CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES RECOGNIZE NECESSITY FOR NEW ORDER, BUT DEMAND TO KNOW WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ISSUANCE OF FRAUDULENT PAPERS

[Special Cable to the Herald]

Herald Bureau,
No. 130 Fleet Street,
London, Tuesday.

The United States Government's sweeping new order requiring every American travelling in Europe to go through a cross-examination before an American diplomatic or consular officer came as a bolt from the blue today. It caused widespread comment, though it is recognized that the measure is necessary to checkmate German spies impersonating American travellers.

There is no criticism of this drastic order, which it is recognized is probably issued to comply with Sir Edward Grey's communication concerning German secret agents posing as American citizens. But many Americans want to know who is responsible for the apparent wholesale issuance of fraudulent American passports to Germans. The result is that now an American passport is not worth the paper it is written on unless backed up by a photograph of the bearer, a description of where he is going, what he is going for, how long he is going to stay and so forth.

American embassies in European capitals today are circulating broadcast warnings to all Americans to consult the nearest diplomatic or consular officer before undertaking any voyage.

All Americans must understand that henceforth a passport does not mean permission to travel in Europe. They must have written and vouched for proof that they are not German spies before they can feel safe.

It is all the result of too free issuance of American passports at the outbreak of the war, coupled with German quickness to profit by American leniency in this respect.

Before the train started a commissionaire appeared, hurrying. He opened the door of their compartment, set a pretty basket inside, which was to be removed at the first station beyond.

The basket contained a very delicious luncheon, and Karen looked up shyly but gratefully as Guild set about unpacking the various dishes. There was salad, chicken, rolls and butter, a pâté, some very wonderful pastry, fruit, and a bottle of Moselle that looked like liquid sunshine.

There was one pasteboard box which Guild gave to her without opening it. She untied the violet ribbon, opened it, sat silent. He seemed to pay no attention to what she was doing.

After a moment she lifted out the cluster of violet-scented orchids, drew the long pin from them, and fastened them to her blouse.

"Thank you—very much," she said shyly.

"Do you care for orchids?"

"Yes . . . I am a little—surprised."

"Why?"

"That you should—think to offer them—to *me*——"

He looked up, and his grey eyes seemed to be laughing, but his mouth—that perplexing, humorous, inscrutable mouth of his remained grave and determined.

"Karen," he said, "if you only understood how much I do like you, you wouldn't perhaps deal so mercilessly with me."

"I? Merciless?"

"You are. You made me use force with you when you should not have resisted. And now you have done something more merciless yet."

"W—what, Kervyn?"

"You know . . . I must have those papers."

"Kervyn!"

"Dear—look at me. No—in the eyes. Now look at me while I say, as seriously and as gently as I know how, that *I am going to have those papers!* . . . You know I mean what I say . . . That is all—dear."

Her eyes fell and she looked at her orchids.

"Why do you speak that way to me—after giving me these?"

"What have orchids to do with a man's duty?"

"Why did you give them to me?"

"Why? Because we are friends, if you will let us be."

"I was willing—am still—in spite of—everything. You know I am. If I can forgive you what you did to me in our stateroom last night, surely, surely Kervyn, you won't take any more chances with my forgiveness—will you?"

He said: "I shall have to if you force me to it. Karen—I never liked any woman as much as I like you. We have known each other two days and a night. But in that time we both have lived a long, long time."

She nodded, thoughtfully.

"Then—you know me now as well as you ever will know me. Better than any other woman has ever known me. When my mind is made up that a certain thing is to be done, I always try to do it, Karen . . . And I know that I ought to have those papers . . . And that I am going to have them. Is that clear—Karen, dear?"

She remained silent, brushing her orchids with her finger-tips, absent-eyed, serene. After a moment he thought that the ghost of a smile was hovering on her lips, but he was not sure.

Presently she looked up:

"Shall we lunch?" she asked.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DAY OF WRATH

THREE times they were obliged to change cars after passing through Utrecht. Night fell; the last compartment into which they had been crowded was filled with Dutch cavalry officers, big, talkative fellows in their field uniforms and jingling equipments, civil to Guild, courteous to Karen, and all intensely interested in the New York newspaper which Guild offered them and which they all appeared to be quite able to read.

They all got out at Maastricht, where the lantern-lit platform was thronged with soldiers; and, when the train started, the two were alone together once more.

They had been seated side by side when the officers were occupying the compartment; they remained so when the train rolled out of the station, neither offering to move, perhaps not thinking to move.

Karen's Tauchnitz novel lay open on her lap, her eyes brooded over the pages, but the light was very dim and presently she lay back, resting her arm on the upholstered window ledge.

Guild had been sitting so very still beside her that

she suspected he was asleep. And when she was sure of it she permitted herself closer scrutiny of his features than she had ever ventured.

Curiosity was uppermost. To inspect at her leisure a man who had so stirred, so dominated, so ruled and misruled her was most interesting.

He looked very boyish, she thought, as he lay there—very clear cut and yellow-haired—very kind—except for the rather square contour of the chin. But the mouth had relaxed from its sternly quiet curve into pleasant lines.

One hand lay on his knees; it was clenched; the other rested inert on the cushioned seat beside her, listless, harmless.

Was that the hand of iron that had closed around her shoulders, pinning both her arms helpless? Were these the hands that had mastered her without effort—the hands which had taken what they chose to take, gently violent, unhurried, methodical and inexorable?

How was it that her swift hatred had not endured in the wake of this insolent outrage? Never before had a hand been laid on her in violence—not even in reproof. How was it that she had endured this? Every womanly instinct had been outraged. How was it that she was enduring it still?—acquiescing in this man's presence here in the same compartment with her—close beside her? She had resented the humiliation. She resented it still, fiercely—when she remembered it. Why didn't she remember it more frequently? Why didn't she think of it every time she looked at him? What was

the trouble with her anger that she seemed to forget so often that she had ever been angry?

Was she spiritless? Had his violence then crippled her pride forever? Was this endurance, this submission, this tacit condoning of an unforgivable offense to continue?

There was colour in her cheeks now as she sat there gazing at him and remembering her wrongs, and industriously fanning the rather sickly flames of her wrath into something resembling a reasonable glow.

But more fuel seemed to be needed for that; the mental search for it seemed to require a slight effort. But she made it and found her fuel—and a brighter colour stained her face.

Dared he lay hands on her again! What did his recent threat mean? He was aware that she had sewed the papers to her clothing. What did he mean by warning her that he would take them by violence again if necessary? It was unthinkable! inconceivable! She shivered unconsciously and cast a rather scared glance at him—this man was not a Hun! She was no Sabine! The era of Pluto and Proserpine had perhaps been comprehensible considering the times—even picturesque, if the galleries of Europe correctly reflected the episode. But such things were not done in 1914.

They were not only not done but the mere menace of them was monstrous—unbelievably brutal. She needed more fuel, caught her breath, and cast about for it to stoke the flames before her flushed cheeks could cool.

And to think—to *think* that she, Karen, was actually

at that moment wearing his orchids—here at her breast! Her gloved hand clenched and she made a gesture as though to tear the blossoms from her person. . . . And did not. . . . They were so delicate, so fresh, so fragrant. . . . After all the flowers were innocent. It was not these lovely, scented little things she should scorn and punish but the man—this man here asleep beside her——

Her heart almost ceased for a moment; he moved, opened his eyes, and lay looking at her, his lids still heavy with sleep.

"You are horribly tired—aren't you?" she faltered, looking into his worn face which two days' lack of sleep had made haggard.

He nodded, watching her.

"I'll move across the way and let you stretch out," he said.

"No—you need not."

"You look dead tired."

"I couldn't sleep that way. You—need not—move."

He nodded; his eyes closed. After he had been asleep a little while, watching him, she wondered what he might be dreaming, for a ghost of a smile edged his lips.

Then, sleeping, his arm moved, encircled her, drew her shoulder against his. And she found herself yielding, guided, relaxing, assenting, until her cheek lay against his shoulder, resting there. And after a while her eyes closed.

The fuel had given out. After a little while the last spark died. And she slept.

CHAPTER XIV

HER ENEMY

THE dim light fell on them where they slept seated upright, unconscious, swaying as the car swayed. Unseen forests swept past on either side under a dark sky set with stars; low mountains loomed in the night, little rivers sparkled under trestles for a second and vanished in the dull roar of the rushing train.

The man, sunk back against the upholstered seat, lay as though dead.

But after a while the girl dreamed. It was the frontier toward which they were rushing through the night —a broad white road running between meadows set with flowers, such as she had often seen.

Two painted sentry boxes stood on either side of the boundary; the one on her side was empty, but in the other she realized that her enemy was on guard, hidden, watching her.

She desired to cross. In all her life never had she so longed for anything as she longed to cross that still, sunny, flower-bordered frontier.

She dared not. Her enemy stood hidden, armed,

watching her from within that painted sentry box. She knew it. She was afraid. She knew that her enemy would step out with weapon levelled and challenge her the instant she set foot across that flowering frontier. She was afraid of his challenge, afraid even to learn what her enemy might look like.

Yet she *must* cross. Something had to be done—something had to be done while the sun was shining and the breeze in the meadow set the flowers all swaying. She looked desperately at the silent sentry box. Nothing moved. Yet she knew her enemy was watching her.

Then, frightened, she set one foot across the line—took one more step, very timidly.

"*Halt! Who goes there?*"

She knew it—she *knew* it! It had come—it had happened to her at last!

"F-friend!" she faltered—"but I do not know the countersign."

"*Pass, friend, without the countersign!*"

Could she believe her ears!

She listened again, her hand resting against her heart. But she only heard a child laughing inside the sentry box, and the smothered ruffle of preening wings.

Her dream partly awoke her; she lay very still, vaguely conscious of where her cheek was resting, then closed her eyes to seek her enemy again among her dreams.

CHAPTER XV

IN CONFIDENCE

THEY awoke with a light shining in their eyes; the guard stood on the running rail, one hand on the knob of the door.

"The frontier," he said. "Descend if you please for the customs, and kindly have your papers ready."

The girl's blue eyes were sleepy and humorous as she rested her hand on his arm to rise.

"Are we ever to have a good night's sleep again?" she murmured as he aided her to descend in the lantern-lit darkness.

"It's our punishment," he said.

"For what, please?"

"For ever doubting each other."

She said nothing. A soldier picked up their luggage and carried it across the platform where another train stood waiting.

And all at once Guild realized that the soldiers around the station and custom-house were not Belgians but Germans. He had forgotten that, and it gave him a distinct shock.

As he and Karen, following the soldier, entered the

long room in the custom-house, an officer all in sea-grey from the shrouded spike on his helmet to his ankles came forward and saluted; and Guild coolly lifted his cap.

"Have I by chance the honour of addressing Herr Guild?" asked the officer.

"I am Herr Guild."

"And—gnädiges Fräulein?"—at salute and very rigid.

"Fräulein Girard."

"The gracious young lady has credentials?—a ring, perhaps?"

Karen drew off her glove, slipped the ring from her finger. A soldier held up a lantern; the lieutenant adjusted a single eye-glass, scrutinized the ring, returned it with a tight-waisted bow.

"Papers in order!" he said, turning to the customs officials. "Pass that luggage without inspection!"

He was very polite. He escorted them to the Belgian train, found an empty compartment for them, thanked them with empressement, and retired into the darkness which had hatched him.

As the train started Karen said in a low voice: "Would you care to call that officer a barbarian, Kervyn?"

"You haven't seen Louvain. But probably that officer has—through his monocle."

She sighed. "Are we to—differ again? I am *so* sleepy."

This time he was entirely awake and responsible for his actions. So was she. But she was really very tired,

she remembered, when conscience began to make her uncomfortable and call her to account.

But she was too weary to argue the point; her cheek rested unstirring against his shoulder; once or twice her eyes opened vaguely, and her hand crept toward the orchids at her breast. But they had not been crushed. Her white lids closed again. It was unfortunate that she felt no desire to sleep. Her conscience continued to meddle at intervals, too.

But of one thing she was quite certain—she would not have tolerated any such thing very long had she not been very sure that he had immediately gone to sleep. . . . And she was afraid that if she stirred he might awake. . . . And perhaps might not be able to go to sleep again. . . . He needed sleep. She told herself this several times.

"Karen?"

"What?" she said in consternation. And she felt her cheeks growing hot.

"You *will* let me have those papers, won't you?"

She lay very still against his shoulder.

"Won't you?" he repeated in a low and very gentle voice.

"Please sleep," she said in a voice as low.

"Won't you answer me?"

"You need sleep *so* much!"

"Please answer me, Karen."

"You know," she said, "that unless you let me sleep I—couldn't rest—like this. Don't you?"

"Are you not comfortable?"

"Yes. . . . But that has nothing to do with it. You know it."

He murmured something which she did not catch.

"I don't *care* to rest this way if we are going to remain awake," she whispered.

"I am asleep," he replied, drowsily.

Whether or not he was, she could not be certain even after a long while. But, in argument with her conscience again, she thought she ought to take the chance that he was asleep because, if he were, it would be inhuman of her to lift her head and arouse him.

Meanwhile the train moved ahead at a fair speed, not very fast, but without stopping. Other trains gave it right of way, hissing on sidings—even military and supply trains which operated within the zone controlled by General von Reiter's division. The locomotive carried several lanterns of various colours. They were sufficient to clear the track for that train through that strip of Belgium to the Luxembourg frontier.

Hills, woods, mountain streams, stretches of ferny uplands, gullies set with beech and hazel flew by under the watching stars.

Over the fields to the west lay what had been Liège. But they swung east through Herve, past Ensival, then south by Theux, Stavelot, over the headwaters of the Ourthe.

Forest trees almost swept the window panes at times; lonely hamlets lay unlighted in darkened valleys. Karen's blue eyes were shut and she did not see these things. As for Guild he lay very still, wondering how

he was to get the papers—wondering, too, what it was about this girl that was making this headlong, nerve-racking quest of his the most interesting and most wonderful journey he had ever undertaken.

They were not asleep, but they should have been. And in separate corners. Conscience was explaining this to her and she was really trying to find relief in sleep. Conscience was less intrusive with him, except in regard to the papers. And when it had nagged him enough he ceased wondering how he was going to get them and merely admitted that he would do it.

And this self-knowledge disturbed him so that he could scarcely endure to think of the matter and of what must happen to their friendship in the end. Sorrow, dismay, tenderness possessed him by turns. She seemed like a slumbering child there on his shoulder, softly fragrant, trustful, pathetic. And he was pledged to a thing that might tear the veil from her eyes—horrify her, crush her confidence in man.

"I can bribe a couple of old women," he thought miserably—"but it's almost as bad as though I did it myself. Good Heavens!—was a man ever before placed in such a predicament?"

And when he couldn't stand his horrid reflections any longer he said, "Karen?" again. So humbly, so unhappily that the girl opened her blue eyes very wide and listened with all her might.

"Karen," he said, "in a comparatively short time you won't listen to me at all—you won't tolerate me. And before that time is upon us, I—I want to say a—few—

words to you . . . about how deeply I value our friendship. . . . And about my very real respect and admiration for you. . . . You won't let me say it, soon. You won't care to hear it. You will scorn the very mention of my name—hate me, possibly—no, probably. . . . And so now—before I have irrevocably angered you—before I have incurred your—dislike—I want to say—if I may—that I—never was as unhappy in all my life."

Lying very still against his shoulder she thought: "He does not really mean to do it."

"Karen," he went on, "if you don't find it in your heart to spare me this—duty—how can I spare myself?"

She thought: "He *does* mean to do it."

"And yet—and yet——"

"He won't do it!" she thought.

"There never has been a coward in my race!" he said more calmly.

"He *does* mean to do it!" she thought. "He is a barbarian, a Hun, a Visigoth, a savage! He is a brute, all through. And I—I don't know what I am becoming—resting here—listening to such—such infamy from him! I don't know what is going to become of me—I don't—I *don't!*"

She caught her breath like a hurt child, hot tears welled up; she turned and buried her face against his arm, overwhelmed by her own toleration of herself and the man she was learning so quickly to endure, to fear, and to care for with all the capacity of a heart and

mind that had never before submitted one atom of either mind or heart to any man.

What had happened to her? What possessed her? What was bewitching her that from the first instant she had laid eyes on him she seemed to realize she belonged with him—beside him! And now—now a more terrifying knowledge threatened, menaced her—the vague, obscure, formless idea that she belonged *to* him.

Did it mean she was in love! Was *this* love? It couldn't be. Love came differently. It was a happiness, a delight, a firm and abiding faith, a sunburst of self-revelation and self-knowledge. It wasn't tears and conscience and bewilderment, and self-reproach—and a haunting fear of self—and a constantly throttled dismay at her own capability for informality—the informality, for example, of her present attitude! And she wept anew at her own astounding degradation.

Love? No, indeed. But a dreadful, unaccountable exposure of her own unaccountable capacity for familiarity! That was it. She was common—common at heart, common by instinct. She had thought she had a will of her own. It seemed she had not. She had nothing!—nothing admirable in her—neither quality nor fineness nor courage nor intellect It must be so, or how could she be where she was, blotting her tears against the shoulder of a man she had known two days! —biting at her quivering lip in silence there, miserable, bewildered, lonely—lonely beyond belief.

"Karen?"

She made the effort, failed, tried again:

"Yes," she managed to say.

"Don't cry any more."

"No."

"Because I don't mean to make you unhappy."

"No-o——"

"But I must have those papers—mustn't I?"

"Y-yes."

"But you are not going to give them to me, are you?"

"No-o."

"And I am not going to—to tear you to pieces, am I?"

"No-o-o——"

"And yet I *must* have them, mustn't I?"

"Yes."

"You know I am going to get them, don't you?"

"Yes."

"How do you think I am going to do it?"

"I d-don't know."

"I think I know one way."

She remained silent.

"It is quite a wonderful way . . . if it could occur—happen, come about."

She said nothing.

"I don't know—I don't know—I won't think about it any more . . . for a while. . . . It's too important to think about . . . in that way . . . if it is going to be important at all. . . . I don't know exactly what I'm saying, Karen. I seem to be thinking out loud. . . . The idea came . . . and then remained. . . . You won't cry any more, will you?"

"No."

"I frightened you, didn't I?"

"No. . . . Yes. . . . Not exactly."

"You know," he said, "I don't understand you."

"Don't you?"

"Not clearly. . . . Do you care a little for me, still?"

"I don't know—how I feel."

"Could you care for me—be friends again—as naturally and as honestly as you were once?"

"I—trusted you. Friendship is trust."

"I know. I have destroyed your confidence."

"Yes—my confidence in friendship."

"That is a terrible thing to do," he said miserably.

"Yes. Friendship ends when distrust begins. I do distrust you and I don't understand why—why distrusting you makes me care for you—even more."

"Karen!"

"I do care—more than I did. Can you explain it?"

He was silent, surprised and touched.

"I can't explain it to myself," she said. "I have been trying to and I can't. I should detest you, but I don't. If there is any contempt it is for myself—because I can not feel it for you, perhaps. I think it's that. I don't know. The years we have lived together in these two days must account for my liking you. . . . Not altogether, because it began in the beginning when you came to Hyacinth Villa. . . . And it's been so all the time."

"Not all the time. Not in our stateroom."

"Yes—even there."

"When I——"

"Yes! Yes! Isn't it degrading? Isn't it unaccountable—terrible! I'm frightened I tell you. I am afraid that whatever you do—will not—change me."

There was no emotion in her young voice, only an accentless admission of facts with a candour and directness that silenced him.

After a moment she went on, without emphasis, and thoughtfully, as though in self-communion to make things clearer to herself:

"I'm really well born. You might be pardoned for not thinking so——"

"Your father is of that caste."

"General von Reiter is not my father."

"What!" he exclaimed, astounded.

She turned her face from his shoulder and looked up at him.

"He spoke to you of me as his daughter. You spoke to me of him in that relation, too. I did not enlighten you because it did not seem to matter. But it is not true."

"Is he—your guardian?"

"No; I need none. My father was a German officer—of that caste. My mother was Danish. . . . Something happened—I do not know what. I was very little. And my mother would never speak of it. She was very beautiful. I remember her quite well. We lived in Copenhagen.

"Whatever happened occurred before I was born. I

know that. Mother told me. My father dropped both title and name and left the army and went with my mother to Copenhagen. He took the name of his mother who was English—Girard. I never was even told what our name had been. Neither father nor mother would ever speak of it."

She rested there silent, absent-eyed, gazing into space as though recalling years that had not been unpleasant. Then, serenely meeting his gaze, she smiled up at him.

"You know," she said, "my life has been a happy one. My father was a man of means. We lived very happily in Denmark. I've always thought of myself as Danish.

"My childhood was really wonderful. I had a passion for study, for learning; and I learn very easily—almost without effort. And you know, perhaps, how thorough the Danish schools are, how much they demand of a child, physically as well as mentally.

"And I did everything, Kervyn; learned the accomplishments of a young Danish girl—and was flattered I am afraid, and perhaps spoiled.

"And always I desired to go on the stage—always—from the very beginning—from the time I was first taken to the theatre.

"It was quite hopeless. I did act for charity, and at school; and afterward took lessons. But as long as my father and mother lived that career was not possible. . . . Afterward I decided for myself. And first I went to Germany and they gave me a small part in a company that was going to Posen. And there General

von Reiter, who had been my father's friend and brother-officer, met me.

"He was very kind. He wished to adopt me and give me his name. He was very insistent, too—a man—Kervyn, not unlike you—in some respects. But I never dreamed of permitting him to sway me—as you do.

"He knew my desire for a stage career; he has for three years attempted to destroy in me that desire. When I had no engagement, or was studying, he insisted that I stay with his brother and his brother's wife, with whom he lived. He spoke freely of his desire and intention of legally adopting me, called me his daughter when he spoke to others of me—and always I felt the constant, iron pressure of his will—always—not harshly, but with the kindly patience of resolution.

"Then I decided to go to England, study, and if possible gain some experience on the London stage.

"And then"—she bit her lip—"I think I may say it—to *you*—not saying it lightly, Kervyn—then, on the eve of my departure, he asked me to marry him.

"And because he would not accept my answer he exacted of me a promise that in November I would return to Berlin, give him my final answer, and choose then between marrying him or a return to the profession I care for most.

"That is my history, Kervyn. No man has ever figured in it; none except General Baron von Reiter has ever even invaded it . . . until you have done so . . . and have made your wishes mine—I don't know how—

and your will my inclination—and me more than the friend I was.

"One thing only you could not do—and in my heart I know you do not wish it of me—and that is, make me break my word—make me forget a promise.

"Now I have told you all," she said with a little sigh, and lay there looking at him.

"Not all, Karen."

"Yes, I think so."

"No. You have not told me what answer you mean to make."

Her eyes opened at that. "I am not in love. What answer should I make?"

"You return to your career?"

"Of course, once my promise is kept."

"What promise?"

"To see him and tell him what I have decided."

"Do you think he might persuade you?"

"No!"

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly."

He said, looking at her with a hint of a smile in his eyes: "Do you think I might ever persuade you to give up your career?"

She smiled frankly: "I don't think so."

"Not if I asked?"

"You wouldn't do such a thing."

"I might if I fell in love with you."

She lay perfectly still, quite tranquil, looking up at him. Suddenly her expression changed.

"Is it likely?" she said, the tint of excitement in her cheeks.

"Do you think so?"

"I don't know. Is it?"

"It's perfectly possible I imagine."

"That you could fall in love with me?"

"Yes."

After a moment she laughed as a child laughs at the prospect of beholding wonders.

"Kervyn," she said, "please do so. I will give you every opportunity if you will remain at Trois Fontaines."

"I mean to remain in that vicinity," he said, meaningly; and she laughed again, deliciously, almost maliciously.

"It would finish you thoroughly," she said. "It would be poetic justice with a vengeance."

"*Your* vengeance?"

"Yes, mine. Oh, if you only *did* do that!"

"I think, considering the way you look at it, that I'd better not," he said, rather seriously. "Besides, I've no time."

"No time to fall in love with me?"

"No time."

"Why?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, please."

"Very well. Because after I have the papers I shall enter the Belgian army." He added with a hint of impatience—"Where I belong and where I ought to be now."

She became very silent at that. After a few moments she said: "Had you decided to do that before I met you?"

"Yes. I was on my way—trying to avoid the very trap I fell into."

"The German army?"

"Yes."

After another silence she said: "I shall be very sorry when you go. I shall think of you when I am in England."

"You can't go back to England, Karen."

"That is true. I forgot."

"Where will you go?"

"I don't know."

"Don't go to Germany."

"Why?"

"There may be an invasion."

She had lifted her head as he spoke. After a moment she sighed like a tired child, laid her head back on his arm and rested one slender hand on his shoulder.

It suddenly seemed to her that the world, which had been going very well with her, had halted, and was beginning to go the other way.

"Kervyn?"

"Yes?"

"You could take the papers when I am asleep, I suppose. I couldn't help it, could I?"

"That *is* one way," he said, smiling.

"What was the other?"

He did not reply.

She sighed again. "I suggested it," she said, "in order to give you a little more time to do—what you said you thought—possible."

"Fall in love?" he asked lightly. "Yes."

"What would be the use, Karen?"

"Use?"

"Yes. I'm going into the army. It will be a long war. If I fell in love with you I'd not have time to win your love in return before I went away—admitting that I could ever win it. Do you see?"

"I quite see that."

"So I had better take the papers when I can, and get into touch with the reserves of my regiment if I can."

"What regiment?"

"The Guides."

"The Guides! Are you an officer?"

"Yes, of the reserve."

She knew quite well what that meant. Only the Belgian nobility of ancient lineage served as officers in the Guides.

A happiness, a wonderful tranquillity crept over her. No wonder she had found it difficult to really reproach herself with her behaviour. And it was a most heavenly comfort to her to know that if she had been indiscreet, at least she had been misbehaving with one of her own caste.

"The next station," said the German guard, squint-

ing in at them from the window under his lifted lantern, "is Trois Fontaines."

"What!" exclaimed Guild surprised. "Have we passed the customs?"

"The customs? This is a German military train! What business is it of the Grand Duchy where we go or what we do?"

He lowered his lantern and turned away along the running-board, muttering: "Customs, indeed! The Grand Duchy had better mind its business—and the Grand Duchess, too!"

A few moments later the locomotive whistled a long signal note to the unseen station.

"Karen," said Guild quietly, "in a few moments I shall be out of debt to General von Reiter. My life will be my own to do with as I please. That means good-bye."

She said with adorable malice: "I thought you were going to rob me first."

"I am," he said, smiling.

"Then I shall make the crime a very difficult one for you. . . . So that our—parting—may be deferred."

The train had already come to a standstill beside a little red-tiled station. Woods surrounded it; nothing was visible except the lamps on a light station-wagon drawn up to the right of the track.

The guard unlocked and opened their compartment. A young man—a mere boy—came up smilingly and lifted his cap:

"Mademoiselle Girard? Monsieur Guild? I come

from Quellenheim with a carriage. I am Fritz Bergner."

He took their luggage and they followed to the covered station-wagon. When they were seated the boy stepped into the front seat, turned his horses, and they trotted away into the darkness of a forest through which ran the widely winding road.

Fresh and aromatic with autumn perfume the unbroken woods stretched away on either hand beneath the splendour of the stars. Under little stone bridges streams darkled, hurrying to the valley; a lake glimmered through the trees all lustrous in the starlight.

Something—perhaps the beauty of the night, possibly the imminence of his departure, kept them silent during the drive, until, at last, two unlighted gate-posts loomed up to the right and the horses swung through a pair of iron gates and up a driveway full of early fallen leaves.

A single light sparkled far at the end of the vista.

"Have you ever before been here?" asked Guild.

"Once, to a hunt."

Presently Guild could see the long, two-storied hunting lodge of timber and stucco construction with its high peaked roof and dormers and a great pair of antlers spreading above the hood of the door.

Out of the doorway came a stout, pleasant-eyed, brown-skinned woman who curtsied to them smilingly and welcomed them in German.

Everything was ready; they had been expected. There was a fire in the hall and something to eat.

Guild asked to be driven to an inn, and the housekeeper seemed surprised. There was no inn. Her orders were to prepare a room for Herr Guild, who was expected to remain over night. She regretted that she could not make them more comfortable, but the Lodge had been closed all summer, and she had remained alone with her son Fritzl to care for the place.

There seemed to be nothing for him to do but to stay over night.

Karen, waiting for his decision, looked pale and tired.

"Very well," he said to Frau Bergner, who curtsied and went away for their candles. Then he walked over to where Karen was standing, lifted her hand and touched the slender fingers with his lips.

"Good night," she said; "I hope your dreams will be agreeable."

"I hope yours will be, also."

"I hope so. I shall try to continue a dream which I had on the train. It was an odd one—something about a frontier and a sentry box. You woke me before I had entirely crossed the frontier. I'd like to cross and find out what really is on the other side."

He laughed:

"I hope you will find, there, whatever you desire."

"I—hope so. Because if I should cross the boundary and find—nobody—there, it might make me unhappy for the rest of my life." And she looked up at him with a slight blush on her cheeks.

Then her features grew grave, her eyes serious, clear, and wistful.

"I think I am—learning to care—a great deal for you. Don't let me if I shouldn't. Tell me while there is time."

She turned as the housekeeper came with the lighted candles.

Guild stood aside for her to pass, his grave face lowered, silent before this young girl's candour and the troubled sincerity of her avowal.

In his own room, the lighted candle still in his hand, he stood motionless, brooding on what she had said.

And in his heart he knew that, although he had never liked any woman as much as he liked this young girl, he was not in love with her. And, somehow or other, he must tell her so—while there was still time.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FOREST LISTENS

HE awoke in a flood of brightest sunshine; his bed, the floor, the walls, were bathed in it; netted reflections of water danced and quivered on the ceiling; and he lay looking at it, pleasantly conscious of green leaves stirring near his open window and of the golden splashing of a fountain.

There was a little bird out there, too, diligently practicing a few notes. The song was not elaborate. Translated, it seemed to consist of tweet! tweet! twilly-willy-willy! repeated an indefinite number of times.

Curious to discover what his surroundings resembled he rose and looked out of the curtained window. There was a grassy carrefour where a fountain spouted into a stone pool; all else was forest; a stream sparkled between tree-trunks, bridged where the drive crossed it.

To bathe and dress did not take him very long. In the hall, which seemed to be the main living-room below, he prowled about, examining a number of antlers and boar-heads mounted on the beamed and plastered walls. The former had been set up in German fashion, antlers, brow-antlers, and frontal bone; and these trophies ap-

peared to him uninteresting—even a trifle ghastly when the bleached skull also was included.

The boars' heads were better, nothing extraordinary in size, but well-tusked. The taxidermy, however, was wretched.

The square hall itself did not appear particularly inviting. The usual long oak table and benches were there, a number of leather arm-chairs, book-racks, cue-racks, gun-racks with glazed panes to protect the weapons, a festoon of spears, hunting knives and curly hunting horns, skins on the floor, brown bear, wolf, and stag.

A badly stuffed otter displayed its teeth on the mantle over the fireplace between a pair of fighting cock pheasants and a jar of alcohol containing a large viper, which embellishments did not add to the cheerfulness of the place.

For the rest there was a billiard table shrouded in a rubber cloth, and three well-engraved portraits on the walls, Bismarck, after Lehnbach, Frederick the Great playing on a flute like fury, and the great War Lord of Europe himself, mustaches on end, sombre-eyed, sullen, cased in the magnificent steel panoply of the Guard Cuirassiers. The art gallery bored Guild, and he opened a door which he suspected communicated with the pantry.

It was a valet's closet and it smelled of camphor. Shooting-coats hung on stretchers; high-laced shooting-boots were ranged in rows. On a chair lay Karen's skirt and blouse-coat of covert cloth. Both were

still slightly damp and wrinkled. Evidently they had been brought down here to be brushed and pressed while Karen slept.

Passing his hand over the brown silk lining of the coat gave him no clue to the hiding-place of the papers; what revealed their presence was a seam which had been hurriedly basted with black thread. The keen point of his pocket-knife released the basting. He drew out the papers, counted them, identified them one by one, and placed them in his breast pocket. Then he laid the coat across the back of the chair again and went out.

He had two hours to wait before there could be any decent hope of breakfast. Nobody seemed to be stirring in the house. After a few minutes he unlocked the front door and went out into the early sunshine.

It was as warm as a spring day; rain had freshened grass and trees; he sat down on the fountain's rim and looked into the pool where a dozen trout lay motionless, their fins winnowing the icy water.

No doubt some spring, high on the wooded hills, had been piped down to furnish the pool with this perpetually bubbling jet.

The little bird who had entertained him vocally earlier in the morning was still vocal somewhere in a huge beech-tree. Around a spot of moisture on the gravel-drive two butterflies flitted incessantly. And over all brooded the calm and exquisite silence of the forest.

An hour or more later he got up and re-entered the house.

First he took a look at the valet's room. Evidently Karen's clothes had been brushed and pressed, for they had disappeared.

Another door in the square hall promised to lead into the pantry, judging from significant sounds within.

It did, and the housekeeper was in there as energetically busy as every German woman always is when occupied. And German women are always occupied.

The kindly soul appeared to be much flattered by his visit. They had quite a gossiping time of it while she was preparing the breakfast dishes.

It was mostly a monologue.

No, she and Fritzl were not lonely at Quellenheim, although it was pleasant to have the Lodge open and a noble company there shooting. But, like Marlbrook, the Herr Baron had gone to the wars—alas!—and it might take him some time to capture Paris and London and set the remainder of the world in order.

But it really seemed too bad; the Herr Baron was fond of his shooting; Fritzl had reported some good antlers in the forest, and a grey boar or two—but enormous! As for the place it would certainly go to ruin what with faggot stealers and godless poachers!—And the foresters, keepers, and even the wood-choppers all gone off and deserting the place—think of it!—the ungrateful Kerls—gone!—and doubtless to join the crazy Belgian army which had refused to permit Prussian troops to pass! *Prussian* troops! The impudence of it! Gratitude! There was little of that in the world it seemed.

"When does the Herr Baron return here?" inquired Guild, smiling.

It appeared that the Herr Baron was to have arrived at Quellenheim this very week. But yesterday his adjutant telegraphed that he could not come perhaps for many weeks. No doubt he was very busy chasing the French and English. It was a pity; because the autumn is *wunderschön* at Quellenheim. And as for the deer!—they stand even in the driveway and look at the Lodge, doubtless wondering, sir, why they are neglected by the hunters, and asking one another why good fat venison is no longer appreciated at Quellenheim.

"Could you tell me where I may telegraph to the Herr Baron?" asked the young man, immensely amused by her gossip.

"That I can, sir. My careful household reports are sent to the Herr Baron through military headquarters at Arenstein, Prussia. That is where he is to be addressed."

"And a telegraph office?"

"At the railroad station."

"In communication with Prussia?"

"Yes, sir," she said with a vigorous nod. "And whenever any of the yokels here about tamper with the wires the Uhlans come and chase them till they think the devil is after them!"

"Uhlans. Here?"

"And why not? Certainly the Uhlans come occasionally. They come when it is necessary. Also they cross the Grand Duchy when they please."

"Then, if I write out a telegram here——"

"Fritzl will take it, never fear, sir. Leave it on the billiard table—any telegrams or letters—and they shall be sent when Fritzl drives to the station."

"Where," he inquired, "is Lesse Forest?" And could he send a messenger?

"Lesse Forest? Why the chasse wall separates the range of the Lesse Hills from Quellenheim. Any peasant at Trois Fontaines who possesses a bicycle could take a message and return in an hour."

"Do you know who leases the chasse at Lesse?"

"Yes. Some wealthy Americans."

So he smiled his thanks and returned to the hall. There was writing material on the long oak table. And first of all he wrote out a brief telegram to General von Reiter saying that he had fulfilled his promise.

This was all he might venture to say in a telegram; the rest he embodied in his letter to the Herr Baron:

> Having telegraphed to you, and fulfilled my enforced obligations to the letter, I am confident that you, in your turn, will fulfill yours, release the hostages held by your troops at Yslemont, and spare the village any further destruction and indemnity.
>
> You had made it a part of the contract that, in case you were not at Quellenheim, I was to remain over night under your roof.
>
> I therefore have done so. It was not an agreeable sensation, and your forced hospitality, you

will recognize, imposes no obligations upon an unwilling guest.

Now, as I say, the last and least item of my indebtedness to you is finally extinguished, and I am free once more to do what I choose.

I shall be a consistent enemy to your country in whatever capacity the Belgian Government may see fit to employ me. I shall do your country all the harm I can. Not being a public executioner I have given the spies in your employment in London a week's grace to clear out before I place proofs of their identity in the hands of the British Government.

This, I believe, closes, for the present, our personal account.

Miss Girard is well, suffered no particular hardship, and is, I suppose, quite safe at Quellenheim where your capable housekeeper and her son are in charge of the Lodge.

May I add that, personally, I entertain no animosity toward you or toward any German, individually—only a deep and inextinguishable hatred toward all that your Empire stands for, and a desire to aid in the annihilation of this monstrous anachronism of the twentieth century.

When he had signed and sealed this, and directed it, he wrote to his friend Darrel:

Dear Harry:

If you are at Lesse Forest still, which I understand adjoins the hills of Quellenheim—and if

your friends the Courlands still care to ask me for a day or two, I shall be very glad to come. I am at Quellenheim, Trois Fontaines.

Please destroy the letter I intrusted to you to send to my mother. Everything is all right again. I may even have time to fish with you for a day or two.

The messenger from Trois Fontaines who takes this will wait for an answer.

Please convey my respect and my very lively sense of obligation to the Courlands. And don't let them ask me if it inconveniences them. I can go to Luxembourg just as well and see you there if you can run over.

Did you get my luggage? I am wearing my last clean shirt. But my clothes are the limit.

If I am to stop for a day or two at the Courlands please telegraph to Luxembourg for my luggage as soon as you receive this.

Yours as usual,

GUILD.

P. S.

Do Uhlans ever annoy the Courlands? I imagine that Lesse is too far from the railway and too unimportant from a military standpoint to figure at all in any operations along the edge of the Grand Duchy. And also any of the Ardennes is unfit as a highway between Rhenish Prussia and France. Am I correct? G.

He had sealed and directed this letter, and was gazing meditatively out of the diamond-leaded windows at

the splashing fountain in the court, when a slight sound attracted his attention and he turned, then rose and stepped forward.

Karen gave him her hand, smiling. In the other hand she held the last of her orchids.

"Are you rested?" he asked.

"Yes. Are you?"

"Perfectly, thank you. Really it is beautiful outside the house."

She lifted her lovely eyes and stood gazing out into the sunshine.

"There is no word from General von Reiter?" she asked, absently caressing her cheek with the fragrant blossom in her hand.

"Not yet," he said.

"If none comes, what are you going to do?"

"I am free, anyhow, to leave now."

"Free?"

"Free of my engagement with Baron von Reiter."

"Free of your obligations to—*me?*" she asked in a low voice.

He turned to her seriously: "My allegiance to you needs no renewal, Karen, because it has never been broken. You have my friendship if you wish for it. It is yours always as long as you care for it."

"I do. . . . Are you going to leave—Quellenheim?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"When a messenger brings me an answer to a letter which I shall send this morning."

She stood caressing her lips with his flower and gazing dreamily into the forest.

"So you really are going," she said.

"I cannot help it."

"I thought"—she forced a smile—"that you intended to rob me first."

He did not answer.

"Had you forgotten?" she asked, still with the forced smile.

"No."

"Do you still mean to do it?"

"I told you that I had to have the papers."

"Yes, and I told you that I should make it as difficult as I could for you. And I'm going to. Because I don't want you to go." She laughed, then sighed very frankly: "Of course," she added, "I don't suppose I could keep them very long if you have made up your mind to take them."

"Is that your idea of me?" he asked, laughing.

She nodded, thoughtfully: "You take what you want, sooner or later. There is no hope in opposing you. You are that kind of man. I have learned that."

She touched the orchid to her chin meditatively "It surprised me," she added. "I have not been accustomed to authority like yours. I am my own mistress, and I supposed I was accountable to myself alone. But—" she lifted her eyes, "it appears that I am accountable to you. And the realization does not seem to anger me very deeply."

He looked away: "I do not try to control you, Karen," he said in a low voice.

"You have done so whether or not you have tried. I don't know what has happened to me. Do you?"

"Nothing," he said, forcing a laugh. "Except you are learning that the greatest pleasure of friendship is a confidence in it which nothing can disturb."

"Confidence in friendship—yes. But confidence in *you!*—that ended in our stateroom. Without confidence I thought friendship impossible. . . . And here I am asking you not to go away—because I—shall miss you. Will you tell me what is the matter with a girl who has no confidence in a man and who desires his companionship as I do yours?" Her cheeks flushed, but her eyes were steady, bright, and intelligent: "Am I going to fall in love with you, Kervyn?"

He laughed mirthlessly: "No, not if you can reason with yourself about it," he said. "It merely means that you are the finest, most honest, most fearless woman I ever knew, capable of the most splendid friendship, not afraid to show it. That is all it means, Karen. And I am deeply, humbly grateful. . . . And very miserable. . . . Because——"

The entrance of Frau Bergner with the breakfast tray checked him. They both turned toward the long oak table.

Fortunately the culinary school where the housekeeper had acquired her proficiency was not German. She had learned her art in Alsace.

So the coffee was fragrant and the omelette a dream;

and there were grapes from the kitchen arbour and ham from a larder never lacking the succulent by-products of the *sanglier* of the Ardennes.

Frau Bergner took his letters and telegram, promising that Fritzl should find somebody with a bicycle at Trois Fontaines to carry the other note to Lesse Forest.

She hovered over them while they ate. The breakfast was a silent one.

Afterward Karen wrote a number of notes addressed to her modiste in Berlin and to various people who might, in her present emergency, supply her with something resembling a wardrobe.

Guild had taken his pipe out to the fountain, where she could see him through the window, seated on the coping of the pool, smoking and tracing circles in the gravel with a broken twig.

She hurried her notes, called the housekeeper to take them, then, without taking hat or gloves, she went out into the sunshine. The habit, so easily acquired, of being with Guild was becoming a necessity, and neither to herself nor to him had it yet occurred to her to pretend anything different.

There was, in her, an inherent candour, which unqualified, perhaps unsoftened by coquetry, surprises more than it attracts a man.

But its very honesty is its undoing; it fails to hold the complex masculine mind; its attractiveness is not permanent. For the average man requires the subtlety of charm to stir him to sentiment; and charm means uncertainty; and uncertainty, effort.

No effortless conquest means more to a man than friendship. And friendship is nothing new to a man.

But it was new to Karen; she had opened her mind to it; she was opening her heart to it, curious concerning it, interested as she had never before been, sincere about it—sincere with herself.

Never before had the girl cared for a man more than she had cared about any woman. The women she had known had not been inferior in intelligence to the men she knew. And a normal and wholesome mind and heart harbour little sentiment when the mind is busy and the body sound.

But since she had known this man she knew also that he had appealed to something more than her intelligence.

Vaguely realizing this in the crisis threatened by his violence, she had warned him that he was violating something more than friendship.

Then the episode had passed and become only an unquiet memory; but the desire for his companionship had not passed; it increased, strengthening itself with every hour in his company, withstanding self-analysis, self-reproach, defying resentment, mocking her efforts to stimulate every tradition of pride—even pride itself.

Deeply conscious of the power his personality exercised over her, perplexed, even bewildered at herself, she had not only endured the intimacy of contact with him, but in her heart she accepted it, cared for it, was conscious of relaxation and contentment except for the constant array of traditional indictments which her con-

science was busily and automatically finding against her.

She could not comprehend why what he had done had not annihilated her interest in him; why she, even with effort, could find in her mind no abiding anger, no scorn, no contempt for him or for what he had done.

And because she was intelligent and healthy, in her perplexity she had tried to reason—had found nothing to account for her state of mind unless love could account for it—and knowing nothing of love, had admitted the possibility to herself and even to him. Intelligence, candour, ignorance of deeper emotion—coupled with the normal mental and physical innocence of a young girl—this was the character she had been born with and which had naturally and logically developed through nineteen years of mental and bodily cultivation. The girl was most fatally equipped for an awakening.

He stood up when she appeared, knocked out his pipe and advanced to meet her. He had been doing a lot of thinking. And he had concluded to talk very frankly to her about her friendship with him—frankly, kindly, discouraging gaily any mistaken notion she might harbour that there could be any room, any reason, any fitness for a deeper sentiment in this friendship—anything more significant than the delightful and frank affection now existing between them.

"Shall we walk in the forest, Karen?" he said.

"Yes, please."

So they turned into a sentier which curved away through a fern-set rabbit warren, over a wooden foot-bridge, and then led them on through alternate flecks of sunshine and shadow through a noble forest of beech and oak.

The green and brown mast lay thick under-foot, premature harvest of windfalls—perhaps the prodigality of those reckless sylvan spendthrifts, the squirrels and jays.

Here and there a cock-pheasant ran through a spinny at their approach; rabbits scuttled into wastes of bracken as yet uncurled and unblemished by a frost; distant crashes and a dull galloping signalled the unseen flight of deer. Now and then the dark disturbance of the forest floor betrayed where the horny, furry snouts of boar had left furrows of fresh black earth amid the acorns.

They came upon the stream again—or perhaps a different little brook, splashing and curling amid its ferns and green, drenched mosses. Stepping stones crossed it; Karen passed lightly, surely, on little flying feet, and stood laughing on the other side as he paused to poke about in the pool in hopes of starting a trout into arrowy flight.

When he crossed she had seated herself under a fir, the branches of which swept the ground around her; and so utterly had she vanished that she was obliged to call him before he could discover her whereabouts.

"Under this green tent," she said, "if I had a bed, and some books, and clothes, and food, and my maid

and—a piano, I could live most happily all summer." She laughed, looked at him—"if I had all these and—*you*," she added.

"Why drag *me* into such a perfect paradise?"

"I shouldn't *drag* you," she said gravely. "I should merely tell you where I lived."

"I didn't mean it that way."

"You might have, with reason. I have demanded a great deal of your time."

"I have demanded all of yours!" he retorted, lightly.

"Not more than I was content to give. . . . It seems all a dream to me—which began when you rang the bell at Hyacinth Villa and roused me from my sleep. And," she added with a gay flash of malice, "you have kept me awake ever since."

"And you, me!"

"Not a bit! You slept in the railway car."

"So did you."

"In your arms, practically. . . ." She looked up at him curiously: "What did you think of me, Kervyn?"

"I thought you were an exceedingly tired girl."

"I was. Is that all you thought about it?"

"You know," he said, laughing, "when a man is asleep he doesn't do much thinking."

"What did you think afterward?"

"About what?"

"About my sleeping against your shoulder?"

"Nothing," he said carelessly.

"Were you quite—indifferent?"

He didn't know how to answer.

"I was not," she said. "I was contented, and I thought continually about our friendship—except when what I was doing made me uneasy about—what I was doing. . . . Isn't it curious that a girl could do a thing like that and feel comfortable except when she remembered that a girl doesn't usually do a thing like that?"

He began to laugh, and she laughed, too.

She said: "Always my inclination has been, from a child, to explain things to myself. But I can't explain you, yet. You are very different, you know."

"Not a bit——"

"Yes, please. I've found that out. . . . Tell me, do you really mean to go today?"

"Yes, Karen, I do."

"Couldn't you stay?"

"I really couldn't."

"Why, please?"

"I must be about my business."

"Enlistment?"

"Yes."

"In the Guides," she said, as though to herself.

He nodded.

"The Guides," she repeated, looking rather vacantly at a sun spot that waxed and waned on the dry carpet of fir-needles at her feet. "I have seen them. They are odd, with their furry headgear and their green jackets and boots and cherry-red breeches. . . . I have danced with officers of the Guides in Brussels. . . . I never thought that my first man friend would be an officer in the Guides."

"I never thought my best friend among women would be the first woman I ever robbed," he said rather grimly.

"Oh, but you haven't done it yet! And I don't see how you propose to do it."

He looked up, forcing a smile:

"Don't you?"

"Not if you are going away. How can you? The only way I can see is for you to stay at Quellenheim in hopes that I might forget to lock my door some night. You know," she said, almost wistfully, "I *might* forget —if you remained long enough."

He shook his head.

"Then you have given it up?"

"No."

"But I don't see!"

She was so pretty in her perplexity, so utterly without art in her frankness and curiosity that the impulse to mystify and torment her possessed him.

"Will you bet that I shall not have those papers in my possession within ten minutes?" he asked.

"How *can* you?"

"I can. And I shall."

She gazed at him incredulously, then suddenly her cheeks lost their colour and she stood up under the fir-tree.

"Must I take them or will you give them up, Karen?" he asked, laughing, as he rose.

She took a step backward, away from him. The tree-trunk checked her.

"You know I can't give them to you," she said unsteadily. "It would be dishonourable."

"Am I to take them?"

"Are you going to?"

"Do you mean to say that rather than surrender them you would endure such violence as that?"

"I promised. . . . Are you going to—to hurt me, Kervyn?" she stammered.

"I'll try not to."

She stood there, breathing fast, white, defiant.

"You'll have to surrender," he said. "You might as well. It's an honourable capitulation in the presence of superior force."

"No."

"You refuse?"

"Yes, please."

He said: "Very well, then," with an alarming frown.

"Kervyn——"

"What?"

"If you tear my gown I—I shall have to go to bed."

"I'm not going to touch your gown," he said. "I'm going to charm those papers so they'll leave their hiding place and fly into my pocket. Watch me very attentively, Karen!" And he tucked up his cuffs and made a few short passes in the air. Then he smiled at her.

"Kervyn! I thought you meant to take them. Do you know you really did frighten me?"

"I *have* got them," he said.

The colour came back into her cheeks; she smiled at him in a breathless way.

"You did frighten me," she said. She came slowly back and seated herself on the carpet of fir-needles. He sat down beside her.

"Karen, dear," he said, "you are a brick and I'm a brute. I took your papers this morning. I *had* to, dear."

And he drew them from his breast pocket and showed them to her.

The girl sat in wide-eyed amazement for a moment. Suddenly her face flushed and the tears flashed in her eyes.

"You have ridiculed me!" she said. "You have treated me like a child!"

"Karen——"

"I will not listen! I shall never listen to you again! You have played with me, hurt me, humiliated me. You have ruled and overruled me! You gained my friendship and treated it—and me—without ceremony. And I let you! I must have been mad——"

Her mouth quivered; she clenched her hands, gazing at him through eyes that glimmered wet:

"How could you do it? I was honest with you; I had had no experience with a man I cared for. You knew it. You let me care for you until I didn't understand—until the sincerity and force of what I felt for you bewildered me!

"And now—and now I am—unhappy—unhappy—miserable. ashamed—" She caught her breath, scarcely

able to see him through her tears—no longer able to control the quivering lip.

She rose swiftly, encountered something—his arm—felt herself drawn resistlessly into his embrace.

"Forgive me, Karen," he said. "I did not realize—what was happening to—us both."

She rested her forehead on his shoulder for a moment.

"Can you forgive me, Karen?"

"Yes."

"You know I truly care for you?"

"Yes."

Scarcely knowing what he was doing, he bent to touch her forehead with his lips, and she lifted her face at the same moment. His kiss fell on her mouth, and she responded. At the same instant her girlhood ended forever—vanished on her lips in a little sigh.

Dazed, silenced, a trifle faint, she turned from him blindly.

"Please," she whispered, in the ghost of a voice; and he released her.

For a few moments she stood resting against the fir-tree, her left arm across her eyes, frightened, motionless.

The forest was very still around her, as though every leaf were listening.

CHAPTER XVII

HER FIRST CAMPAIGN

"KAREN," she heard him say, in a constrained and unfamiliar voice, "I love you."

If he thought he was still speaking to the same girl whose soft and fragrant lips he had touched a moment before, he was mistaken. He spoke too late. The girl had vanished with her girlhood.

And now it was with a very different sort of being he had to do—with a woman whose mind had quickened under shock; whose latent emotions had been made conscious; whose spirit, awakened by a crisis, was already armoured and in arms. Aroused, alert, every instinct awake, proud of a new and radiant knowledge, new motives germinated, new impulses possessed her; a new and delicious wisdom thrilled her. She was ready, and she realized it.

"Karen?"

She heard him perfectly. Deep within her something was laughing. There was no hurry. She knew it.

"Karen?" he said, very humbly.

Conscious of the change within herself, still a little surprised and excited by it, and by a vaguely exquisite

sensation of impending adventure, of perils charmingly indefinite, of the newness of it all, deep, deep within her she felt the certainty, the tranquillity, the sweet intoxication of power. Power! She knew she was using it now. She knew she was exercising it on this man. And, for a second, the grasp of the new weapon almost frightened her. For it was her first campaign. And she had not yet reconnoitered the adversary or fully developed his strength and position. Man, as an adversary, was still unknown to her.

"Karen?" he ventured, rather anxiously.

Instantly she lost a large portion of her fear of him. Oh! but she had a long, long reckoning to settle yet with him. She cast a swift glance backward, but already her girlhood was gone—gone with its simplicity, its quaint perplexities, its dear ignorance, its pathos, its helplessness before experience, its naïveté, its faith.

It had gone, slipped away, exhaled in a deep, unconscious sigh. And suddenly she flushed hotly, remembering his lips. Truly, truly there was a long reckoning still to come. . . . But there seemed to be no hurry.

Still leaning against the tree, she fumbled for her handkerchief, touched her eyes with it leisurely, then, still turning her back to him, she lifted her hands to her hair.

For a first campaign she was doing very well.

Her thick, burnished hair was not in any desperate disorder, but she touched it here and there, patted, tucked, caressed it with light, swift fingers, delicately precise as the exploring antennæ of a butterfly.

"Give me my answer, Karen," he urged, in a low voice, stepping nearer. Instantly she moved lightly aside to avoid him—just a short step—her back still turned, her hands framing her bright hair. Presently she looked around with a slight laugh, which seemed to say: "Have you noticed my new wings? If I choose to use them, I become unattainable. Take care, my friend!"

The expression of her face checked him; her eyes were still starry from tears. The dewy loveliness of them, the soft shyness born of knowledge, the new charm of her left him silent and surprised. He had supposed that she was rather low in her mind. Also he became aware that something about her familiar to him had gone, that he was confronted by something in her hitherto unsuspected and undetected—something subtly experienced and unexpectedly mature. But that a new intelligence, made radiant by the consciousness of power, had suddenly developed and enveloped this young girl, and was now confronting him he did not comprehend at first.

And yet, in her attitude, in the poise of the small head, in the slight laugh parting her lips, in every line of her supple figure, every contour, every movement, he was aware of a surety, a self-confidence, a sort of serene authority utterly unfamiliar to him in her personality.

Gone was the wistfulness, the simplicity, the indecision of immaturity, the almost primitive candour that knows no art. Here was complexity looking out

of eyes he scarcely knew, baffling him with a beauty indescribable.

"Karen—dear?" he said unsteadily, "have you nothing to say to me?"

There was laughter and curiosity in her eyes, and a hint of mockery.

"Yes," she said, "I have a great deal to say to you. In the first place we must not be silly any more——"

"*Silly!*"

She seemed surprised at his emphatic interruption.

"Yes, silly," she repeated serenely; "foolish, inconsequential. I admit I made a goose of myself, but that is no excuse for you to do it, too. You are older and more experienced and *so* much wiser——"

"Karen!"

"Yes?" she said innocently.

"What has happened to you?" he asked, disturbed and bewildered.

She opened her eyes at that:

"Nothing has happened, has it? Is my gown torn?" —bending over to survey her skirt and waist—"Oh, I forgot that the famous robbery occurred without violence——"

He reddened: "I don't understand you, Karen. Why do you fence this way with me? Why do you speak this way to me? What has suddenly changed you—totally altered you—altered your attitude toward me, your point of view, your disposition—your very character apparently——"

"My character?" she repeated with a gay little

laugh which seemed to him irresponsible, and confused him exceedingly.

"No," he said, troubled, "that couldn't change so suddenly. But I never before saw this side of your character. I didn't know it existed—never supposed—dreamed——"

"Speaking of dreams," she interrupted with calm irrelevance, "I never told you that I finally did cross that frontier. Shall I tell you about it while we are walking back?"

"If you choose," he said, almost sullenly.

"Don't you care to hear about my dream? As I made a pillow of you during the process, I really think you are entitled to hear about it—" She broke off with a quick, involuntary laugh: "Why do you look hurt, Kervyn?"

At that he became serious to the verge of gloom.

"Come," she said sweetly, slipping her hand through his arm, "I want to tell you how I crossed that wonderful frontier——"

"I told you," he said gravely, "that I love you. Am I not entitled to an answer?"

"Entitled, Kervyn? I don't know to how many things you are *en*-titled. All I know is that you are titled—several times—aren't you?"

He reddened and bit his lip.

"Because," she went on gaily, "you served your time in the Guides. That is a very natural deduction, isn't it?"

He said nothing; he was very seriously upset. His stern mouth and darkened face betrayed it. And deep

in Karen's heart the little imps of laughter danced to its mischievous beating.

After they had walked through the forest for a while in silence, she halted and withdrew her arm.

"You know," she said, "we are not nearly well enough acquainted for you to be moody and unamiable."

"I did not mean to be either," he said. "What is it that has come between us, Karen?"

"Why, nothing I hope," she said fervently.

"I hope so, too. . . . You have been different since—" He hesitated, and she turned her head carelessly and looked back at the little brook they had crossed. When her blush had cooled she resumed her leisurely walk and glanced up at him inquiringly:

"Since *when* have you thought me different?"

"Since we—*kissed*——"

"Please, Kervyn! Not *we*. I think it was you who performed that very childish rite."

"Is that the way you regarded it?"

"Didn't you?"

"No."

"You didn't take it seriously!" she exclaimed with an enchanting laugh. "Did you really? I'm so dreadfully sorry!"

The dark flush on his face frightened her. It was her first campaign and she was easily alarmed. But she was wise enough to say nothing.

"Yes," he said with an effort, "I did take it very seriously. And I took you seriously, too. I don't understand your new attitude toward me—toward life

itself. Until today I had never seen any lightness in you, any mockery——"

"Lightness? You saw plenty in me. I was not very difficult, was I?—on the train? Not very reticent about my views concerning friendship and my fears concerning—love. Why should you be surprised at the frivolity of such a girl? It has taken so many years for me to learn to laugh. Nineteen, I think. Won't you let me laugh a little, now that I know how?"

"Have I any influence at all with you?" he asked. "I thought I had."

"I thought so, too," she mused, innocently.

"What has happened to destroy it?"

"Why, nothing, Kervyn!" opening her eyes.

"Does any of my influence with you remain?"

"Loads of it. Oceans! Bushels!"

"Do you care for me?"

"Of course! The silly question."

"Seriously?"

"Yes, but I don't wish to weep because I care for you."

"Could you learn to love me?"

"Learn? I don't know," she mused aloud, apparently much interested in the novelty of the suggestion. "I learn some things easily; mathematics I never could learn. *Why* are you scowling, Kervyn?"

"Could you ever love me?" he persisted, doggedly.

"I don't know. Do you desire to pay your court to me?"

"I—yes——"

"You appear to be uncertain. It seems to me that a man ought to know whether or not he desires to pay his addresses to a girl."

"Can't you be serious, Karen!"

"Indeed I can. You ought to know it, too. I was serious enough over you, once. I followed you about so faithfully and persistently that even when you took a nap I did it too——"

"Karen, do you love me?"

"I don't know."

"Will you try?"

"I'm always willing to try anything—once."

"Then suppose you try marrying me, once!" he said, bluntly.

"But oughtn't a girl to be in love before she tries that? Besides, before I am quite free to converse with you on that subject I must converse with someone else."

"What!"

"Had you forgotten?"

"Do you mean the——"

"Yes," she said hastily—"you *do* remember. *That* is a prior engagement."

"Engagement!"

"An engagement to converse on the subject of engagements. I told you about it—in the days of my communicative innocence."

He was patient because he had to be.

"After you have made your answer clear to him, may I ask you again?"

"Ask me what?"

"To marry me."

"Wouldn't that permission depend upon what answer I may give *him?*"

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, "is there any doubt about your answer to him?"

She lifted her eyebrows: "You are entirely too confident. Must I first ask your permission to fulfill my obligations and then accomplish them in a manner that suits your views? It sounds a little like dictation, Kervyn."

He walked beside her, cogitating in gloom and silence. Was this the girl he had known? Was this the same ungrateful and capricious creature upon whom he had bestowed his protection, his personal interest, his anxious thoughts?

That he had fallen in love with her had surprised him, but it did not apparently surprise her. Had she instinctively foreseen what was going to happen to him? Had she deliberately watched the process with wise and feminine curiosity, coolly keeping her own skirts clear?

And the more he cogitated, the deeper and more complex appeared to him her intuitive and merciless knowledge of man.

Never had he beheld such lightning change in a woman. It couldn't be a change; all this calm self-possession, all the cool badinage, all this gaiety, this laughing malice, this serene capacity for appraising man and his motives must have existed in her—hidden, not latent; concealed, not embryotic!

He was illogical and perfectly masculine.

She was only a young girl, awakened, and making her first campaign.

CHAPTER XVIII

LESSE FOREST

AS they came out of the forest and crossed the grassy circle where the fountain was splashing they saw an automobile standing in the drive by the front door.

"What does that mean?" exclaimed Guild, under his breath.

Both had halted, checked by the same impulse.

"Is it likely to be Baron von Reiter?" he asked, coldly.

She said, with admirable composure: "Whoever it is, we shall have to go in."

"Yes, of course. . . . But if it happens to be the Baron——"

"Well?" she asked, looking away from him.

"In that event, have you nothing to say to me—*now*?"

"Not now."

"Haven't you, Karen?"

She shook her head, gazing steadily away from him.

"All right," he said, controlling his voice; "then I can make my adieux to you indoors as well as here."

"Are you leaving immediately?"

"Yes. I should have left this morning."

After a moment's silence: "Shall I hear from you?"

"Have I your permission to write—if I can do so?"

"I don't know yet. I shall write you first. Are you to be at Lesse Forest for a few days?"

"Yes. A note will reach me in care of Mrs. Courland."

Her pretty head was still averted. "We ought to go in now," she said.

Guild glanced sharply at the car as they passed it, and the chauffeur touched his cap to them. It was a big, dark blue, three-seated touring car, and there seemed to be nothing at all military in its appointments or in the chauffeur's livery.

He opened the front door for Karen, and they walked into the hall together.

A man rose quickly from a leather chair, as though he were a little lame. "Hello, Kervyn!" he said gaily, advancing with hand extended. "How are you, old top!"

"Harry!" exclaimed Guild; "I'm terribly glad to see you!"

They stood for a moment smiling at each other, hand clasped in hand. Then Darrel said:

"When your note came this morning, we decided to motor over, Miss Courland and I—" He turned toward a brown-eyed, blond young girl: "Valentine, this is the celebrated vanishing man I've been worrying

over so long. You may not think he is worth worrying over, now that you see him, and maybe he isn't; but somehow or other I like him."

Miss Courland laughed. "I think I shall like him, too," she said, "now that I know he isn't merely a figment of your imagination—" She turned her brown eyes, pleasantly and a trifle curiously, toward Karen, who had paused beside the long table—a lithe and graceful figure in silhouette against the brilliancy of the sun-lit doorway.

"Karen," said Guild, "this is Miss Courland who extends her own and Mrs. Courland's charity to me—" He checked himself, smiling. "*Do* you still extend it, Miss Courland?"

Valentine had come forward and had offered her hand to Karen, and retaining it for a second, she turned to answer Guild:

"Of course! We came to take you back with us." And, to Karen: "It isn't a very gracious thing for us to do—to steal a guest from Quellenheim—and I am afraid you do not feel very grateful toward me for doing it."

Their hands parted and their eyes rested on each other for a second's swift feminine appraisal.

"Baron von Reiter has not yet arrived," said Karen, "so I do not think Mr. Guild has had a very interesting visit. I feel as though I ought to thank you for asking him to Lesse."

Guild, who was talking to Darrel, heard her, and gave her a rather grim look.

Then he presented Darrel; and the light, gossipy conversation became general.

With one ear on duty and one listening to Darrel, Guild heard Karen giving to Valentine a carelessly humorous outline of her journey from England—caught the little exclamations of interest and sympathy from the pretty brown-eyed American girl, and still was able to sketch for Darrel the same theme from his own more sober point of view.

Neither he nor Karen, of course, spoke of the reason for Guild's going to England, nor that the journey had been undertaken on compulsion, nor, indeed, did they hint at anything concerning the more sinister and personal side of the affair. It merely appeared that a German general, presumably a friend of Guild, not being able to get his daughter out of England after hostilities had commenced, had confided the task to a man he trusted and who was able to go unquestioned into a country at war with his own. But it all seemed quite romantic enough, even under such circumstances, to thrill Valentine Courland.

"Do come back to Lesse with us, won't you?" she asked Karen. "My mother and I would love to have you. You'd be bored to distraction here with only the housekeeper. Do come!"

"I haven't any clothes," said Karen frankly.

"I have loads of them! We'd be so glad to have you at Lesse. Won't you come back with us?"

Karen laughed, enchanted. She could see Guild without looking at him. His attitude was eloquent.

"If you really do want me, I'll come," she said. "But you and Mr. Darrel will remain to luncheon, won't you? I'll speak to the Frau Förster—if I may be excused—" She fell for a moment again, unconsciously, into her quaint schoolgirl manner, and dropped them a little curtsey.

Guild opened the pantry door for her and held it.

"May I explain to them a little more clearly who you are, Karen?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes, please."

He came back into the hall where Miss Courland and Darrel were talking. Valentine turned swiftly.

"Isn't she the sweetest thing!" exclaimed the girl warmly.

"She is really very wonderful," said Guild; "let me tell you a little about her accomplishments and herself."

They were still listening to Guild, with an interest which absorbed them, when Karen returned.

"The few clothes I have," she said, "are being repacked by Frau Bergner. Kervyn, shall she repack your sack?"

"No, I'll do that," he said, turning away with the happiest face he had worn that morning. And the girl knew that it was because they were going away together again—taking life's highway once more in each other's company. Involuntarily she looked after him, conscious for a second, again, of new and powerful motives, new currents, new emotions invading her; and she wondered how vitally they concerned this man who had so suddenly destroyed a familiar world for her and as sud-

denly was offering her as substitute a new and strange one.

Emerging from her brief abstraction she looked across the hall at Valentine Courland, who, seated on the oak table, chatted animatedly with Darrel. The girl was exceedingly attractive; Karen realized that at once. Also this pretty American had said very frankly that she was certain to like Guild. Karen had heard her say it.

"Miss Girard," said Darrel, "is the shooting good at Quellenheim? I imagine it must be, judging from these trophies." He waved a comprehensive hand toward the walls of the room.

Karen came slowly over to Valentine: "I really don't know much about shooting. There are boar and deer here. I suppose at Lesse Forest you have really excellent sport, don't you?"

"Our guests seem to find the shooting good," replied Valentine. "My mother and I go out with them sometimes. I don't know whether we shall be able to offer anybody any shooting this autumn. We are exceedingly worried about Lesse Forest. You see, every autumn we renew the lease, but our lease expired last week, and we can't renew it because nobody seems to know where our landlord is or where to find him."

"Is your landlord Belgian?"

"Yes. He is a wealthy brewer at Wiltz-la-Vallée. And the Germans bombarded and burnt it—everything is in ruins and the people fled or dead. So we are really very much concerned about the possible fate of our

landlord, Monsieur Paillard, and we don't exactly know what to do."

Guild returned, coming downstairs two at a time, his attractive features very youthful and animated. And Karen, discreetly observing him and his buoyant demeanour, felt a swift and delightful confusion in the knowledge of her power to make or unmake the happiness of a grown man.

Frau Bergner appeared with cloth and covers, beaming, curtseying to all; and very soon they were at luncheon—a simple but perfectly cooked luncheon, where everything was delectable and there did not seem to be very much of any particular variety, yet there was just a trifle more than enough for everybody. Which is the real triumph of a good German, French, or Belgian housekeeper's calculations.

And when luncheon was ended the luggage already had been placed in the car; the chauffeur emerged from the kitchen where Frau Bergner had been generous to him; and in a few moments the big blue machine was whirring smoothly on its way to Lesse, through the beautiful Ardennes forests over smooth, well-cared-for roads, the sun shining in a cloudless sky, and four young people making rapid headway in a new acquaintanceship which seemed to promise everything agreeable and gay.

At the huge, moss-grown gate-posts of Lesse a forester lifted his grey felt hat and opened the gates; and around the first curve appeared the celebrated and beautiful old lodge of weather-stained stone and slate,

the narrow terrace blazing with geraniums and scarlet sage.

Guild noticed a slender, red-haired girl seated on the steps, knitting, with a heap of dark-blue wool in her lap; but when the car drew up, Valentine Courland addressed her as "mother"—to the intense surprise of Karen as well as of himself, for Mrs. Courland seemed scarce older than her own daughter, and quite as youthfully attractive.

She welcomed Karen with a sweet directness of manner which won the girl instantly; and her manner to Guild was no less charming—an older woman's delightful recognition of a young man's admiration, and a smiling concession to this young man's youth and good looks.

When Valentine mentioned Karen's plight in the matter of wardrobe, her mother laughed gaily and, slipping one arm around Karen's waist, took her off into the house.

"We shall remedy that immediately," she said. "Come and see what suits you best."

"As for you," said Darrel to Guild, "your luggage is in your room. I suppose you are glad of that."

"Rather," said Guild with such intense feeling that Valentine Courland laughed outright.

"Take him to his beloved luggage," she said to Darrel; "I had no idea he was so vain. You know the room, don't you? It is next to your own."

"Harry, why are you limping?" asked Valentine as Darrel rose to go.

"I'm not."

"You are. Why?"

"Rum. I drink too much of it," he explained seriously.

So the young men went away together; and presently Guild was flinging from him the same worn clothing which, at one terrible moment, seemed destined to become his shroud: and Darrel sat on the bed and gave him an outline of the life at Lesse Forest and of the two American women who lived there.

"Courland loved the place," said Darrel, "and for many years until his death he spent the summers here with his wife and daughter.

"That's why they continue to come. The place is part of their life. But I don't know what they'll do now. Monsieur Paillard, their landlord, hasn't been heard of since the Germans bombarded and burnt Wiltz-la-Vallée. Whether poor Paillard got knocked on the head by a rifle-butt or a 41-centimetre shell, or whether he was lined up against some garden wall with the other poor devils when the Prussian firing-squads sickened and they had to turn the machine-guns on the prisoners, nobody seems to know.

"Wiltz-la-Vallée is nothing but an ill-smelling heap of rubbish. The whole country is in a horrible condition. You know a rotting cabbage or beet or turnip field emits a bad enough smell. Add to that the stench from an entire dead and decomposing community of three thousand people! Oh yes, they dug offal trenches, but they weren't deep enough. And besides there was

enough else lying dead under the blackened bricks and rafters to poison the atmosphere of a whole country. It's a ghastly thing what they've done to Belgium!"

Guild went to his modern bathroom to bathe, but left the door open.

"Go on, Harry," he said.

"Well, that's about all," continued Darrel. "The Germans left death and filth behind them. Not only what the hands of man erected is in ruins, but the very face of the earth itself is mangled out of all recognition. They tore Nature herself to pieces, stamped her features out, obliterated her very body! You ought to see some of the country! I don't mean where towns or solitary farms were. I mean the *land*, the *landscape!* —all full of slimy pits from their shells, cut in every direction by their noisome trenches, miles and miles of roadside trees shot to splinters, woodlands burnt to ashes, forests torn to slivers—one vast, distorted and abominable desolation."

Guild had reappeared, and was dressing.

"They didn't ransack the Grand Duchy," continued Darrel, "although I heard that the Grand Duchess blocked their road with her own automobile and faced the invaders until they pushed her aside with scant ceremony. If she did that she's as plucky as she is pretty. That's the story, anyway."

"Have the Germans bothered you here?" asked Guild, buttoning a fresh collar.

"Not any to speak of. Of course they don't care anything about the frontier; they'd violate it in a min-

ute. And I've been rather worried because a lot of these Luxembourg peasants, particularly the woodsmen and forest dwellers, are Belgians, or are in full sympathy with them. And I'm afraid they'll do something that will bring the Germans to Lesse Forest."

"You mean some sort of franc-tireur business?"

"Yes, I mean just that."

"The Germans shoot franc-tireurs without court-martial."

"I know it. And there has been sniping across the border, everywhere, even since the destruction of Wiltz-la-Vallée. I expect there'll be mischief here sooner or later."

Guild, tall, broad-shouldered, erect, stood by the window looking out between the gently blowing sash-curtains, and fastening his waistcoat.

And, standing so, he said: "Harry, this is no place for Mrs. Courland and her daughter. They ought to go to Luxembourg City, or across the line into Holland. As a matter of fact they really ought to go back to America."

"I think so too," nodded Darrell. "I think we may persuade them to come back with us."

Without looking at his business partner and friend, Guild said: "I am not going back with you."

"What!"

"I can't. But you must go—rather soon, too. And you must try to persuade the Courlands to go with you."

"What are you planning to do?" demanded Darrel

with the irritable impatience of a man who already has answered his own question.

"You can guess, I suppose?"

"Yes, dammit!—I can! I've been afraid you'd do some such fool thing. And I ask you, Kervyn, as a sane, sensible Yankee business man, *is* it necessary for you to gallop into this miserable free fight and wallow in it up to your neck? Is it? Is it necessary to propitiate your bally ancestors by pulling a gun on the Kaiser and striking an attitude?"

Guild laughed. "I'm afraid it's a matter of propitiating my own conscience, Harry. I'm afraid I'll have to strike an attitude and pull that gun."

"To the glory of the Gold Book and the Counts of Gueldres! *I* know! You're very quiet about such things, but I knew it was inside you all the time. Confound it! I was that worried by your letter to me! I thought you'd already done something and had been caught."

"I hadn't been doing anything, but I *had* been caught."

"I knew it!"

"Naturally; or I shouldn't have written you a one-act melodrama instead of a letter. . . . Did you destroy the letter to my mother?"

"Yes, I did."

"That was right. I'll tell you about it some time. And now, before we go down, this is for your own instruction: I am going to try to get into touch with the Belgian army. How to do it I don't see very clearly,

because there are some two million Germans between me and it. But that's what I shall try to do, Harry. So, during the day or two I remain here, persuade your friends, the Courlands, of the very real danger they run in remaining at Lesse. Because any of these peasants at any moment are likely to sally forth Uhlan sniping. And you know what German reprisals mean."

"Yes," said Darrel uneasily. He added with a boyish blush: "I'm rather frightfully fond of Valentine Courland, too."

"Then talk to the Courlands. Something serious evidently has happened to their landlord. If he made himself personally obnoxious to the soldiery which destroyed Wiltz-la-Vallée, a detachment might be sent here anyway to destroy Lesse Lodge. You can't tell what the Teutonic military mind is hatching. I was playing chess when they were arranging a shooting party in my honour. Come on downstairs."

"Yes, in a minute. Kervyn, I don't believe you quite got me—about Valentine Courland."

Guild looked around at him curiously.

"Is it the real thing, Harry?"

"Rather. With *me*, I mean."

"You're in *love?*"

"Rather! But Valentine raises the deuce with me. She won't listen, Kervyn. She sits on sentiment. She guys me. I don't think she likes anybody else, but I'm dead sure she doesn't care for me—that way."

Guild studied the pattern on the rug at his feet.

After a while he said: "When a man's in love he doesn't seem to know it until it's too late."

"Rot! I knew it right away. Last winter when the Courlands were in New York I knew I was falling in love with her. It hurt, too, I can tell you. Why, Kervyn, after they sailed it hurt me so that I couldn't think of anything. I didn't eat properly. A man like you can't realize how it hurts to love a girl. But it's one incessant, omnipresent, and devilish gnawing—a sensation of emptiness indescribable filled with loud and irregular heart-throbs—a happy agony, a precious pain——"

"Harry!"

"What?" asked that young man, startled.

"Do you realize you are almost shouting?"

"Was I? Well, I'm almost totally unbalanced and I don't know how long I can stand the treatment I'm getting. I've told her mother, and she laughs at me, too. But I honestly think she likes me. What would you do, Kervyn, if you cared for a girl and you couldn't induce her to converse on the subject?"

Guild's features grew flushed and sombre. "I haven't the faintest idea what a man should do," he said. "The dignified thing would be for a man to drop the matter."

"I know. I've dropped it a hundred times a week. But she seems to be glad of it. And I can't endure that. So I re-open the subject, and she re-closes it and sits on the lid. I tell you, Kervyn, it's amounting to a living nightmare with me. I am so filled with tenderness and

sentiment that I can't digest it unaided by the milk of human kindness——"

"Do you talk this way to her?" asked Guild, laughing. "If you compare unrequited love to acute indigestion no girl on earth is going to listen to you."

"I have to use some flights of imagination," said Darrel, sulkily. "A girl likes to hear anything when it's all dolled out with figures of speech. What the deuce are you laughing at? All right! Wait until you fall in love yourself. But you won't have time now; you'll enlist in some fool regiment and get your bally head knocked off! I thought I had troubles enough with Valentine, and now this business begins!"

He got up slowly, as though very lame.

"It's very terrible to me," he said, "to know that you feel bound to go into this mix-up. I was afraid of it as soon as I heard that war had been declared. It's been worrying me every minute since. But I suppose it's quite useless to argue with you?"

"Quite," said Guild pleasantly. "What's the matter with your leg?"

"Barked the shin. Listen! Is there any use reasoning with you?"

"No, Harry."

"Well, then," exclaimed Darrel in an irate voice, "I'll tell you frankly that you and your noble ancestors give me a horrible pain! I'm full of all kinds of pain and I'm sick of it!"

Guild threw back his blond head and laughed out-

right—a clear, untroubled laugh that rang pleasantly through the ancient hall they were traversing.

As they came out on the terrace where the ladies sat in the sun knitting, Valentine looked around at Guild.

"What a delightfully infectious laugh you have," she said. "Was it a very funny story? I can scarcely believe Mr. Darrel told it."

"But he did," said Guild, seating himself beside her on the edge of the stone terrace and glancing curiously at Karen, who wore a light gown and was looking distractingly pretty.

"Such an unpleasant thing has occurred," said Mrs. Courland in her quiet, gentle voice, turning to Darrel. "Our herdsman has just come in to tell Michaud that early this morning a body of German cavalry rode into the hill pastures and drove off the entire herd of cattle and the flock of sheep belonging to Monsieur Paillard."

There was a moment's silence; Darrel glanced at Guild, saying: "Was there any explanation offered for the requisition?—any indemnity?"

"Nothing, apparently. Schultz, the herdsman, told Michaud that an Uhlan officer asked him if the cattle and sheep did not belong to the Paillard estate at Lesse. That was all. And the shepherd, Jean Pascal, tried to argue with the troopers about his sheep, but a cavalryman menaced him with his lance. The poor fellow is out in the winter fold, weeping like Bo-Peep, and Schultz is using very excited language. All our forest guards and wood-choppers are there. Michaud has

gone to Trois Fontaines. They all seem so excited that it has begun to disturb me a little."

"You see," said Valentine to Guild, "our hill pastures are almost on the frontier. We have been afraid they'd take our cattle."

He nodded.

"Do you suppose anything can be done about it?" asked Mrs. Courland. "I feel dreadfully that such a thing should happen at Lesse while we are in occupation."

"May I talk with your head gamekeeper?" asked Guild.

"Yes, indeed, if you will. He ought to return from Trois Fontaines before dark."

"I'll talk to him," said Guild briefly. Then his serious face cleared and he assumed a cheerfulness of manner totally at variance with his own secret convictions.

"Troops have got to eat," he said. "They're likely to do this sort of thing. But the policy of the Germans, when they make requisition for anything, seems to be to pay for it with vouchers of one sort or another. They are not robbers when unmolested, but they are devils when interfered with. Most troops are."

The conversation became general; Darrel, sitting between Karen and Mrs. Courland, became exceedingly entertaining, to judge from Karen's quick laughter and the more subdued amusement of Katharyn Courland.

Darrel was explaining his lameness.

But the trouble with Darrel was that his modesty in-

clined him to be humorous at his own expense. Few women care for unattractive modesty; few endure it, none adores it. He was too modest to be attractive.

"I was sauntering along," he said, "minding my own business, when I came face to face with a wild boar. He was grey, and he was far bigger than I ever again desire to see. Before I could recover my breath his eyes got red and he began to make castanette music with his tusks, fox-trot time. And do you know what happened —in *your* forest, Mrs. Courland? I went up a tree, and I barked my shin in doing it. If you call that hospitality, my notions on the subject are all wrong."

"Didn't you have a gun?" asked Karen.

"I did. I admit it without a blush."

"Why didn't you use it?" asked Mrs. Courland.

"Use it? How? A gun doesn't help a man to climb a tree. It is in the way. I shall carry no more guns in your forest. A light extension ladder is all I require. And a book to pass away the time when treed."

They all laughed. "Really," asked Guild curiously, "why didn't you shoot?"

"First of all," said Darrel serenely, "I do not know how to fire off a gun. Do you want any further reasons?"

"You looked so picturesque," said Valentine scornfully, "I never dreamed you were such a dub! And you don't seem to care, either."

"I don't. I like to catch little fish. But my ferocity ends there. Kervyn, shall we try the trout for an hour this afternoon?"

Valentine turned up her dainty nose. "I shall take Mr. Guild myself. You'd better find a gamekeeper who'll teach you how to shoot off a gun." And, to Guild: "I'll take you now if you like. It's only a little way to the Silverwiltz. Shall I get a rod and fly-book for you?"

Karen, watching her, saw the frank challenge in her pretty brown eyes, saw Guild's swift response to that gay defiance. It was only the light, irresponsible encounter of two young people who had liked each other at sight and who had already established a frank understanding.

So Valentine went into the house and returned presently switching a light fly-rod and a cast of flies; and Guild walked over and joined her.

To Karen he looked very tall and sunburned, and unfamiliar in his blue-serge lounging clothes—very perfectly groomed, very severe, and unapproachable; and so much older, so much more mature, so much wiser than she had thought him.

And, as her eyes followed him from where she was seated among the terrace flowers, she realized more than ever that she did not know what to say to him, what to do with him, or how to answer such a man.

Her face grew very serious; she was becoming more deeply impressed with the seriousness of what he had asked of her; of her own responsibility. And yet, as far as love was concerned, she could find no answer for him. Friendship, swift, devoted, almost passionate, she had given him—a friendship which had withstood the hard

shocks of anger and distrust, and the more bewildering shock of his kiss.

She still cared for him, relied on him; wished for his companionship. But, beyond that, what had happened, followed by his sudden demand, had startled and confused her, and, so far, she did not know whether it was in her to respond. Love loomed before her, mighty and unknown, and the solemnity of its pledges and of its overwhelming obligations had assumed proportions which awed her nineteen years.

In her heart always had towered a very lofty monument to the sacredness of love, fearsomely chaste, flameless, majestic. So pure, so immaculate was this solemn and supreme edifice she had already builded that the moment's thrill in his arms had seemed to violate it. For the girl had always believed a kiss to be in itself part of that vague, indefinite miracle of supreme surrender. And the knowledge and guilt of it still flushed her cheeks at intervals and meddled with her heart.

She had forgiven, had tried to readjust herself before her mystic altar. There was nothing else to do. And the awakened woman in her aided her and taught her, inspiring, exciting her with a knowledge new to her, the knowledge of her power.

Then, as she sat there looking at this man and at the brown-eyed girl beside him, suddenly she experienced a subtle sense of fear: fear of what? She did not know, did not ask herself. Not even the apprehension, the dread of parting with him had made her afraid; not even the certainty that he was going to join

his regiment had aroused in her more than a sense of impending loneliness.

But something was waking it now—something that pierced her through and through: and she caught her breath sharply, like a child who has been startled.

For the first time in her life the sense of possession had been aroused in her, and with it the subtle instinct to defend what was her own.

She looked very intensely at the brown eyes of the young girl who stood laughing and gossiping there with the man she did not know how to answer—the man with whom she did not know what to do. But every instinct in her was alert to place upon this man the unmistakable sign of ownership. He was hers, no matter what she might do with him.

To Darrel, trying to converse with her, she replied smilingly, mechanically; but her small ears were ringing with the gay laughter of Valentine and the quick, smiling responses of Guild as they stood with their heads together over the contents of the fly-book, consulting, advising, and selecting the most likely and murderous lures.

Neither of them glanced in her direction; apparently they were most happily absorbed in this brand new friendship of theirs.

Very slowly and thoughtfully Karen's small head sank; and she sat gazing at the brilliant masses of salvia bloom clustering at her feet, silent, overwhelmed under the tremendous knowledge of what had come upon her here in the sunshine of a cloudless sky.

"Au revoir!" called back Valentine airily; "we shall return before dusk with a dozen very large trout!"

Guild turned to make his adieux, hat in hand; caught Karen's eye, nodded pleasantly, and walked away across the lawn, with Valentine close beside him, still discussing and fussing over the cast they had chosen for the trout's undoing.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LIAR

THE lamps had not yet been lighted in the big, comfortable living-room and late sunlight striped wall and ceiling with rose where Karen sat sewing, and Darrel, curled up in a vast armchair, frowned over a book. And well he might, for it was a treatise on German art.

His patience arriving at the vanishing point he started to hurl the book from him, then remembering that it was not his to hurl, slapped it shut.

Which caused Karen to lift her deep violet eyes inquiringly.

"Teutonic Kultur! I've got its number," he said. Which observation conveyed no meaning to Karen.

"German art," he explained. "It used to be merely ample, adipose, and indigestible. Now the moderns have made it sinister and unclean. The ham-fist has become the mailed fist; the fat and trickling source of Teutonic inspiration has become polluted. There is no decadence more hideous than the brain cancer of a Hercules."

Karen followed him with intelligent interest. She

said with hesitation: "The moderns, I think, are wandering outside immutable boundaries. Frontiers are eternal. If any mind believes the inclosed territory exhausted, there is nothing further to be found outside in the waste places—only chaos. And the mind must shift to another and totally different pasture—which also has its boundaries eternal and fixed."

"Right!" exclaimed Darrel. "No sculptor can find for sculpture any new mode of expression beyond the limits of the materials which have always existed; no painter can wander outside the range of black and white, or beyond the surface allotted him; the composer can express himself in music only within the limits of the audible scale; the writer is a prisoner to grammatical expression, walled always within the margins of the printed page. Outside, as you say, lies chaos, possibly madness. The moderns are roaming there. And some of them are announcing the discovery of German Kultur where they have barked their mental shins in outer darkness."

Karen smiled. "It is that way in music I think. The dissonance of mental disturbance warns sanity in almost every bar of modern music. It is that which is so appalling to me, Mr. Darrel—that in some modernism is visible and audible more and more the menace of mental and moral disintegration. And the wholesome shrink from it."

Darrel said: "Three insane 'thinkers' have led Germany to the brink where she now stands swaying. God help her, in the end, to convalescence—" he stared at the fading sunbeams on the wall, and staring, quoted:

" '*Over broken oaths and*
Through a sea of blood.' "

He looked up. "I'm sorry: I forget you are German."

"I forget that I am supposed to be, too. . . . But you have not offended me. I know war is senseless. I know that war will not always be the method used to settle disputes. There will be great changes beginning very soon in the world, I think."

"I believe so, too. It will begin by a recognition of the rights of smaller nations to self-government. It will be an area of respect for the weak. Government by consent is not enough; it must become government by request. And the scriptures shall remain no more sacred than the tiniest 'scrap of paper' in the archives of the numerically smallest independent community on earth.

"The era of physical vastness, of spheres of influence, of scope is dying. The supreme wickedness of the world is Force. That must end for nations and for men. Only one conflict remains inevitable and eternal; the battle of minds, which can have no end."

For an American and an operator in real estate, Darrel's philosophy was harmlessly respectable if not very new. But he thought it both new and original, which pleased him intensely.

As for Karen, she had been thinking of Guild for the last few minutes. Her sewing lay in her lap, her dark, curly head rested in the depths of her arm-chair. Sunlight had almost faded on the wall.

Through the window she could see the trees. The golden-green depths of the beech-wood were growing dusky. Against the terrace masses of salvia and geraniums glowed like coals on fire. The brown-eyed girl had been away with him a long while.

Mrs. Courland came in, looking more youthful and pretty than ever, and seated herself with her knitting. The very last ray from the sinking sun fell on her ruddy hair.

"Think you are right, Harry," she said quietly to Darrel. "I think we will sail when you do. The men on the place are becoming very much excited over this Uhlan raid on the cattle. I could hear them from my bedroom window out by the winter fold, and they were talking loudly as well as recklessly."

"There's no telling what these forest people may do," admitted Darrel. "I am immensely relieved to know that you and Valentine are to sail when I do. As for Kervyn Guild—" he made a hopeless gesture—"his mind is made up and that always settles it with him."

"He won't return with you?"

"No. He's joining the Belgians."

"Really!"

"Yes. You see his people were Belgian some generations back. It's a matter of honour with him and argument is wasted. But it hits me pretty hard."

"I can understand. He is a most delightful man."

"He is as straight and square as he is delightful. His mother is charming; his younger brother is everything you'd expect him to be after knowing Kervyn. Theirs

is a very united family, but, do you know I am as certain as I am of anything that his mother absolutely approves of what he is about to do. She is that sort. It may kill her, but she'll die smiling."

Mrs. Courland's serious, sweet eyes rested on him, solemn with sympathy for the mother she had never met.

"The horrid thing about it all," continued Darrel, "is that Kervyn is one man in a million;—and in a more terrible sense that is all he can be in this frightful and endless slaughter which they no longer even pretend to call one battle or many.

"He's a drop in an ocean, only another cipher in the trenches where hell's hail rains day and night, day and night, beating out lives without distinction, without the intelligence of choice—just raining, raining, and beating out life! . . . I can scarcely endure the thought of Kervyn ending that way—such a man—my friend——"

His voice seemed hoarse and he got up abruptly and walked to the window.

Ashes of roses lingered in the west; the forest was calm; not a leaf stirred in the lilac-tinted dusk.

Karen, who had been listening, stirred in the depths of her chair and clasped her fingers over her sewing.

Mrs. Courland said quietly:

"It is pleasant for any woman to have known such a man as Mr. Guild."

"Yes," said Karen.

"If the charm of his personality so impresses us who have known him only a very little while, I am thinking

what those who are near and dear to him must feel."

"I, too," said Karen, faintly.

"Yet she loves him best who would not have it otherwise it seems."

"Yes; he must go," said Karen. "Some could not have it—otherwise."

A man came to light the lamps. And a little while after they were lighted Mrs. Courland quietly looked up from her knitting. One swift, clear glance she gave; saw in the young girl's eyes what she had already divined must be there. Then bent again above her ivory needles. After a while she sighed, very lightly.

"They're late," remarked Darrel from the window.

"They are probably strolling up the drive; Valentine knows enough not to get lost," said her mother.

After a few moments Karen said: "Would my playing disturb you?"

"No, dear. Please!"

So Karen rose and walked to the piano. Presently Darrel turned and seated himself to listen to the deathless sanity of Beethoven flowing from the keys under a young girl's slender fingers.

She was still seated there when Valentine came in, and turned her head from the keyboard, stilling the soft chords.

"We had such a good time," said Valentine. "We caught half a dozen trout, and then I took him to the Pulpit where we sat down and remained very quiet; and just at sunset three boar came out to feed on the oak

mast; and he said that one of them was worth shooting!"

"You evidently *have* had a good time," said Darrel, smiling. "What happened to Guild. Did the boar tree *him?*"

"I think he'd be more likely to tree the boar," remarked the girl. And to her mother she said: "He went on toward the winter fold to talk to Michaud who has just returned from Trois Fontaines. There were a lot of men there, ours and a number of strangers. So I left him to talk to Michaud. What have you all been doing this afternoon?" turning to Karen, and from her, involuntarily to Darrel.

"Miss Girard and I have conversed philosophically and satisfactorily concerning everything on earth," he said. "I wish my conversations with you were half as satisfactory."

Valentine laughed, but there was a slight flush on her cheeks, and again she glanced at Karen, whose lovely profile only was visible where she bent in silence above the keyboard.

"Your mother," remarked Darrel, "has decided to sail with me. Would you condescend to join us, Valentine?"

"Mother, are you really going back when Harry sails?"

"Yes. I don't quite like the attitude of the men here. And Harry thinks there is very likely to be trouble between them and the Germans across the border."

The girl looked thoughtfully at her mother, then at Darrel, rather anxiously.

"Mother," she said, "I think it *is* a good idea to get Harry out of the country. He is very bad-tempered, and if the Germans come here and are impudent to us he'll certainly get himself shot!"

"I! I haven't the courage of a caterpillar!" protested Darrel.

"You're the worst fibber in the Ardennes! You *did* kill that grey boar this morning! What do you mean by telling us that you went up a tree! Maxl, the garde-de-chasse at the Silverwiltz gate, heard your shot and came up. And you told him to dress the boar and send a cart for it. Which he did!—you senseless prevaricator!"

"Oh, my!" said Darrel meekly.

"And you're wearing a bandage below your knee where the boar bit you when you gave him the coup-de-grâce! Maxl washed and bound it for you! What a liar you are, Harry! Does it hurt?"

"To be a liar?"

"No! where you were tusked?"

"Maxl was stringing you, fair maid," he said lightly.

"He wasn't! You walk lame!"

"Laziness and gout account for that débutante slouch of mine. But of course if you care to hold my hand——"

The girl looked at him, vexed, yet laughing:

"I don't *want* people who do not know you to think you really are the dub you pretend to be! Do you wish Miss Girard to believe it?"

"Truth is mighty and must——"

"I know more about you than you think I do, Harry. Mr. Guild portrayed for me a few instances of your 'mouse'-like courage. And I don't wish you to lose your temper and be shot if the Uhlans ride into Lesse and insult us all! Therefore I approve of our sailing for home. And the sooner the better!"

"You frighten me," he said; "I think I'll ask Jean to pack my things now." And he got up, limping, and started for the door.

"Mother," she said, "that boar's tusks may poison him. Won't you make him let us bandage it properly?"

"I think you had better, Harry," said Mrs. Courland, rising.

"Oh, no; it's all right——"

"Harry!" That was all Valentine said. But he stopped short.

"Take his other arm, mother," said the girl with decision.

She looked over her shoulder at Karen; the two young girls exchanged a smile; then Valentine marched off with her colossal liar.

CHAPTER XX

BEFORE DINNER

MICHAUD, head forester, had taken off his grey felt hat respectfully when Valentine introduced him to Guild, there in the lantern light of the winter sheep fold. A dozen or more men standing near by in shadowy groups had silently uncovered at the same time. Two wise-looking sheep dogs, squatted on their haunches, looked at him.

Then the girl had left Guild there and returned to the house.

"I should like to have a few moments quiet conversation with you," said Guild; and the stalwart, white-haired forester stepped quietly aside with him, following the younger man until they were out of earshot of those gathered by the barred gate of the fold.

"You are Belgian?" inquired Guild pleasantly.

"*De Trois Fontaines, monsieur.*"

It was a characteristic reply. A Belgian does not call himself a Belgian. Always he designates his nationality by naming his birthplace—as though the world must know that it is in Belgium.

"And those people over there by the sheep fold?" asked Guild.

"Our men—some of them—from Ixl, from the Black Erenz and the White, from Lesse—one from Liège. And there is one, a stranger."

"From where?"

"Moresnet."

"Has he any political opinions?"

"He says his heart is with us. It is mostly that way in Moresnet."

"In Moresnet ten per cent of the people are Germans in sympathy," remarked Guild. "What is this man? A miner?"

"A charcoal burner."

"Does he seem honest?"

"Yes, Monsieur," said the honest forester, simply.

Guild laid one hand on the man's broad shoulder:

"Michaud," he said quietly, "I know I am among friends if you say I am. I mean friends to Belgium."

The dark eyes of the tall forester seemed to emit a sudden sparkle in the dusk.

"Monsieur is American?"

"Yes. My grandfather was Belgian."

"Monsieur is a friend?"

"Michaud, my name, in America is Guild. My name in Belgian is Kervyn Gueldres. Judge, then, whether I am a friend to your country and your king."

"Gueldres!" whispered the forester, rigid. "Kervyn of Gueldres, Comte d'Yvoir, Hastiere——"

"It is so written on the rolls of the Guides."

"Monsieur le Comte has served!"

"Two years with the colours. I am here to report for duty. Do you feel safe to trust me now, Michaud, my friend?"

The tall, straight forester uncovered. "Trust a Gueldres! My God!"

"Put on your hat," said Guild, bluntly, "I am American when I deal with men!"

"Monsieur le Comte——"

"'Monsieur' will do. Give me your hand! That is as it should be. We understand each other I think. Now tell me very clearly exactly what happened this morning on the hill meadows of the Paillard estate."

"Monsieur le——"

"Please remember!"

"Pardon! Monsieur Guild, the Grey Uhlans rode over the border and laughed at the gendarme on duty. Straight they made for our hill meadows, riding at ease and putting their horses to the hedges. Schultz, our herdsman, saw them trotting like wolves of the Black Erenz, ran to the wooden fence to close the gate, but their lances rattling on the pickets frightened him.

"They herded the cattle while their officers sat looking on by the summer fold.

"'Do not these cattle and sheep belong to the Paillard estate?' asks one of the officers of Schultz. And, 'Very well then!' says he; 'we are liquidating an old account with Monsieur Paillard!'

"And with that a company of the Grey Ones canters away across the valley and up the slope beyond

where our shepherd, Jean Pascal, is sitting with his two dogs.

" 'You, there!' they call out to him. 'Send out your dogs and herd your sheep!' And, when he only gapes at them, one of their riders wheels on him, twirling his lance and shoves him with the counter-balance.

"So they make him drive his flock for them across the valley, and then over the border—all the way on foot, Monsieur; and then they tell him to loiter no more but to go about his business.

"That is what has happened on our hill pasture. He, the lad, Pascal, is over there with his dogs"—pointing toward the fold—"almost crazed with grief and shame. And, Schultz, he wishes us to organize as a franc-corps. Me? I don't know what to do—what with Monsieur Paillard away, and the forests in my care. Were it not for my responsibility——"

"I know, Michaud. But what could an isolated franc-corps do? Far better to join your class if you can—when your responsibility here permits. Those young men, there, should try to do the same."

"Monsieur is right! Even the classes of 1915, '16, and '17 have been called. I have reminded them. But this outrage on the hill pastures has inflamed them and made hot-heads of everybody. They wish to take their guns and hunt Grey Uhlans. They don't know what they are proposing. I saw something of that in '70. Why the Prussians hung or shot every franc-tireur they caught; and invariably the nearest village was burned. And I say to them that even if Monsieur Paillard is

dead, as many are beginning to believe, his death does not alter our responsibility. Why should we bring reprisals upon his roof, his fields, his forests? No, that is not honest conduct. But if we are now really convinced of his death, as soon as Madame Courland leaves, let us turn over the estate to the proper authorities in Luxembourg. Then will each and all of us be free to join the colours when summoned—if God will only show us how to do it."

"Madame Courland and mademoiselle ought to go tomorrow," said Guild. "One or another of your hotheads over there might get us into trouble this very night."

"The man from Moresnet talks loudest. I have tried to reason with him," said Michaud. "Would you come to the fold with me?"

They walked together toward the lantern light; the men standing there turned toward them and ceased their excited conversation.

"Friends," said old Michaud simply, "this gentleman's name is Kervyn of Gueldres. I think that is sufficient for any Belgian, or for any man from the Grand Duchy?"

Off came every hat.

"Cover yourselves," continued Michaud calmly. "Monsieur, who has become an American, desires to be known as Monsieur Guild without further mark of respect. This also is sufficient for us all, I suppose. Thou! Jean Pascal, cease thy complaints and stand straight and wipe thy tears. By God, I think there are

other considerations in Lesse Forest than the loss of thy sheep and of Schultz's cattle!"

"M-my sheep are gone!" blubbered the boy, "I was too cowardly to defend them——"

"Be quiet," said Guild. "It was not a question of your courage! You did wisely. Show equal wisdom now."

"But I shall go after Uhlans now with my fusil-de-chasse! Ah, the cowards of Germans! Ah, the brigands——"

"Cowards! Assassins!" muttered the other. "Grey wolves run when a man goes after them——"

"You are wrong," said Guild quietly. "Germans are no cowards. If they were there would be no credit for us in fighting them. Don't make any mistake you men of the Ardennes; their soldiers are as brave as any soldiers. And where you belong is with your colours, with your classes, and in uniform. That's where I also belong; that's where I am going if I can find out how to go. Perhaps one of you can guide me. Think it over. Keep cool, and listen to Michaud, who is older and wiser than all of us."

There was a profound silence. Then a voice from the darkness, very distinct:

"I have seen red. It is necessary for me to bleed an Uhlan!"

Guild walked toward the sound of the voice: "Who are you?" he demanded.

"*Moi, je suis de Moresnet!*"

"Then you'd better go back to the zinc mines of Mo-

resnet, my friend. No Uhlans will trouble you down there."

And, aside to Michaud: "Look out for that young man from Moresnet. He's too hotly a Belgian to suit my taste."

"Monsieur, he is a talker," said Michael with a shrug.

"My friend, be careful that he is nothing more dangerous."

"Ah, sacré bleu!" exclaimed the forester, reddening to his white temples—"if any of that species had the temerity to come among us!——"

"Michaud, they might even be among the King's own entourage. . . . No doubt that fellow is merely, as you say, a talker. But—he should not be left to wander about the woods *alone*. And, tell me, is there anybody else you know of who might do something rash tonight along the boundary?"

"Monsieur—there are two or three poor devils who escaped the firing squads at Yslemont. They live in our forest, hiding. Our people feed them."

Guild said in a troubled voice: "Such charity is an obligation. But nevertheless it is a peril and a menace to us all."

"Were this estate my own," said the sturdy forester, "I would shelter them as long as they desired to remain. But I am responsible to Monsieur Paillard, and to his tenant, Madame Courland. Therefore I have asked these poor refugees to continue on to Diekirch or to Luxembourg where the sight of an Uhlan's schapska will be no temptation to them."

"You are right, Michaud." He held out his hand; the forester grasped it. "Tomorrow we should talk further. Our duty is to join the colours, not to prowl through the woods assassinating Uhlans. Good night! In the morning then?"

"At Monsieur's service."

"And both of us at the service of the bravest man in Europe—Albert, the King!"

Off came their hats. And, as they stood there in silence under the stars, from far away across the misty sea of trees came the sound of a gun-shot.

"One of your men?" asked Guild sharply.

"I don't know, Monsieur. Big boar feed late. A poacher perhaps. Perhaps a garde-de-chasse at Trois Fontaines."

"I hope nothing worse."

"I pray God not."

They continued to listen for a while, but no other sound broke the starry silence. And finally Guild turned away with a slight gesture, and walked slowly back to the Lodge.

Lights from the tall windows made brilliant patches and patterns across terrace and grass and flowers; the front door was open and the pleasant ruddy lamp-light streamed out.

Valentine passing and mounting the stairs caught sight of him and waved her hand in friendly salute.

"We're sterilizing Harry's shins—mother and I. The foolish boy was rather badly tusked."

"Is he all right?"

"Perfectly, and bored to death by our fussing."

She ran on up the stairs, paused again: "We're not dressing for dinner," she called down to him, and vanished.

Guild said, "All right!" glanced at the hall clock, and sauntered on into the big living-room so unmistakably American in its brightness and comfort.

But it was not until he had dropped back into the friendly embrace of a stuffed arm-chair that he was aware of Karen curled up in the depths of another, sewing.

"I didn't know you were here," he said coolly. "Have you had an agreeable afternoon?"

"Yes, thank you."

"It's a very charming place."

"Yes."

"I think the Courlands are delightful."

"Very."

"Miss Courland and I had a wonderful walk. We had no trouble in taking all the trout we needed for dinner, and then we went to a rock called The Pulpit, where we lay very still and talked only in whispers until three wild boars came out to feed."

Karen lifted her eyes from her sewing. They seemed unusually dark to him, almost purple.

"After that," he went on, "we walked back along the main ride to a carrefour where the drive crosses; and so back here. That accounts for my afternoon." He added, smiling carelessly: "May I ask you to account for yours?"

"Yes, please."

"Very well, then I do ask it."

She bent over her sewing again: "I have been idle. The sun was agreeable. I went for a little stroll alone and found an old wall and a pool and a rose garden."

"And then?"

"The rose garden is very lovely. I sat there sewing and—thinking——"

"About what?"

"About—you—mostly."

He said steadily enough: "Were your thoughts pleasant?"

"Partly."

"Only partly?"

"Yes. . . . I remembered that you are joining your regiment."

"But that should not be an unpleasant thought for you, Karen."

"No. I would have it so, of course. It could not be otherwise under the circumstances."

"It could not be otherwise," he said pleasantly; but his grey eyes never left the pale, sweet profile bent above the leisurely moving needle.

"I understand."

"I know you understand *that*—at least, Karen."

"Yes. Other matters, too—a little better than I did—this morning."

"What matters?" he asked casually. But his heart was threatening to meddle with his voice; and he set his

lips sternly and touched his short mustache with careless fingers.

Karen bent still lower over her sewing. The light was perfectly good, however.

"What," he asked again, "are the matters which you now understand better than you did this morning?"

"Matters—concerning—love."

He laughed: "Do you think you understand love?"

"A little better than I did."

"In what way? You are not in love, are you, Karen?"

"I think—a—little."

"With whom?"

No answer.

"Not with *me?*"

"Yes." She turned swiftly in the depths of her chair to confront him as he sprang to his feet.

"Wait!" she managed to say; and remained silent, one slim hand against her breast. And, after a moment: "Would you not come any nearer, please."

"Karen——"

"Not now, please. . . . Sit there where you were. . . . I can tell you better—all I know—about it."

She bent again over her needle, sewing half blindly, the hurrying pulses making her hand unsteady. After he was seated she turned her head partly around for a moment, looking at him with a fascinated and almost breathless curiosity.

"If I tell you, you will come no nearer; will you?" she asked.

"No. Tell me."

She sewed for a while at random, not conscious what her fingers were doing, striving to think clearly in the menace of these new emotions, the power of which she was divining now, realizing more deeply every second.

"I'll try to tell you," she said: "I didn't know anything—about myself—this morning. What we had been to each other I considered friendship. Remember it was my first friendship with a man. And—I thought it *was* that."

After a silence: "Was it anything deeper?" he asked.

"Yes, deeper. . . . You frightened me at first. . . . I was hurt. . . . But not ashamed or angry. And I did not understand why. . . . Until you spoke and said —what you said."

"That I love you?"

"Yes. . . . After that things grew slowly clearer to me. I don't know what I said to you—half the things I said on the way back—only that I made you angry—and I continued, knowing that you were angry and that I—I was almost laughing—I don't know why—only that I needed time to try to think. . . . You can't understand, can you?"

"I think so."

She looked up, then bowed her head once more.

"That is all," she said under her breath.

"Nothing more, Karen?"

"Only that—after you had gone away this afternoon I began to be a little in love."

"Will it grow?"

"I think so."

"May I tell you that I love you?"

"Yes, please."

His clasped hands tightened on his knees; he said in a low unsteady voice: "All my heart is yours, Karen—all there is in me of love and loyalty, honour and devotion, is yours. Into my mind there is no thought that comes which is not devoted to you or influenced by my adoration of you. I love you—every word you utter, every breath you draw, every thought you think I love. The most wonderful thing in the world would be that you should love me; the greatest miracle that you might marry me. Dare I hope for you, Karen?"

"Yes—please."

"That you will grow to really love me?"

"Yes."

"With all your heart?"

"I think so."

In the tremulous silence she turned again and looked at him, bending very low over her work.

"Will you be gentle with me, Kervyn?"

"Dearest——"

"I mean—considerate—at first. . . . There is a great deal I don't know about men—and being in love with one of them. . . . Brought up as I have been, I could not understand that you should take me—in your arms. . . . I was not angry—not even ashamed. . . . Only, never having thought of it—and taking it for granted that, among people of your caste and mine, to touch a man's lips was an act—of betrothal—perhaps of marriage——"

"Dearest, it *was!*"

"Yes, I understand now. But for a while I felt—strangely—overwhelmed. . . . You can understand—having no mother—and suddenly face to face with—you——"

She leaned her cheek against the back of the chair and rested so, her small white hands folded over her sewing.

"I have yet to see Baron Kurt," she said half to herself. "I shall say to him that I care for you. After that—when you come back, and if you wish me to marry you—ask me."

He stood up: "How near may I come to you, Karen?"

"Not *very* near—just now."

"Near enough to kiss your finger-tip."

"Yes, please."

Without turning her head she extended her arm; his lips touched lightly the fragrant skin, and she pressed her fingers a trifle closer—a second only—then her arm fell to her lap.

"After dinner," she said, "I shall show you the roses in the garden."

"They are no sweeter than your hand, Karen."

She smiled, her flushed cheek still resting against the cushions.

"It is very wonderful, very gentle after all," she murmured to herself.

"What, Karen?"

"I meant love," she said, dreamily.

CHAPTER XXI

SNIPERS

DINNER was ended. Darrel lay on a lounge in the sitting-room, a victim against his will to romance. Beside him on a low footstool sat Valentine, reading aloud to him when she thought he ought to be read to, fussing with his pillows when she chose to fuss, taking his cigarette from his lips and inserting a thermometer at intervals, and always calmly indifferent to his protests or to her mother's laughter.

For she had heard somewhere that a wild boar's teeth poisoned like a lion's mauling; and the sudden revelation of a hero under the shattered shell of modesty and self-depreciation which so long obscured the romantic qualities in this young man determined her to make him continue to play a rôle which every girl adores—the rôle of the stricken brave.

Never again could Darrel explain to her how timidity, caution, and a native and unfeigned stupidity invariably characterized his behaviour at psychological moments.

For Guild had told her all about this young man's cool resourcefulness and almost nerveless courage during those hair-raising days in Sonora when the great Yo

Espero ranch was besieged, and every American prisoner taken was always reported "Shot in attempting to escape."

She had never even known that Darrel had been in Mexico until Guild told her about their joint mining enterprise and how, under a spineless Administration, disaster had wiped out their property, and had nearly done the same for them.

"Mother," said the girl, "I think I'll look at his shin again."

"Nonsense!" protested Darrel, struggling to sit up, and being checked by a soft but firm little hand flat against his chest.

"I don't want to have my shin looked at," he repeated helplessly.

"Mother, I am going to change the dressing. Will you help?"

"For the love of Mike——"

"Be quiet, Harry!"

"Then make Guild go out of the room! He's laughing at me now!"

Karen was laughing, too, and now she turned to Guild: "Come," she said, smilingly; "we are not welcome here. Also I do want you to see the rose garden by star-light." And to Mrs. Courland, naïvely: "May we please be excused to see your lovely garden?"

The pretty young matron smiled and nodded, busy with the box of first-aid bandages for which Valentine was now waiting.

So Karen and Guild went out together into the

star-light, across the terrace and lawns and down along a dim avenue of beeches.

The night was aromatic with the clean sweet odour of the forest; a few leaves had fallen, merely a tracery of delicate burnt-gold under foot.

Karen turned to the right between tall clipped hedges.

Mossy steps of stone terminated the alley and led down into an old sunken garden with wall and pool and ghostly benches of stone, and its thousands of roses perfuming the still air.

They were all there, the heavenly company, dimly tinted in crimson, pink, and gold—Rose de Provence, Gloire de Dijon, Damask, Turkish, Cloth of Gold—exquisite ghosts of their ardent selves—immobile phantoms, mystic, celestial, under the high lustre of the stars.

Mirror-dark, the round pool's glass reflected a silvery inlay of the constellations; tall trees bordered the wall, solemn, unstirring, as though ranged there for some midnight rite. The thin and throbbing repetition of hidden insects were the only sounds in that still and scented place.

They leaned upon the balustrade of stone and looked down into the garden for a while. She stirred first, turning a little way toward him. And together they descended the steps and walked to the pool's rim.

Once, while they stood there, she moved away from his side and strolled away among the roses, roaming at random, pausing here and there to bend and touch with her face some newly opened bud.

Slender and shadowy she lingered among the unclos-

ing miracles of rose and gold, straying, loitering, wandering on, until again she found herself beside the pool of mirror black—and beside her lover.

"Your magic garden is all you promised," he said in a low voice—"very wonderful, very youthful in its ancient setting of tree and silvered stone. And now the young enchantress is here among her own; and the spell of her fills all the world."

"Do you mean me?"

"You, Karen, matchless enchantress, sorceress incomparable who has touched with her wand the old-familiar world and made of it a paradise."

"Because I said I loved you—a little—has it become a paradise? You know I only said '*a little.*' "

"I remember.

"Of course," she added with a slight sigh, "it has become more, now, since I first said that to you. I shouldn't call it 'a little,' now; I should call it——" She hesitated.

"Much?"

She seemed doubtful. "Yes, I think it is becoming 'much'—little by little."

"May I kiss—your hand?"

"Yes, please."

"And clasp your waist—very lightly—*this* way?"

"In sign of betrothal?"

"Yes."

She looked up at him out of the stillest, purest eyes he had ever beheld.

"You know best, Kervyn, what we may do."

"I know," he said, drawing her nearer.

After a moment she rested her cheek against his shoulder.

Standing so beside the pool, breathing the incense of the roses, she thought of the dream, and the gay challenge, "Who goes there?" She was beginning to suspect the answer, now. It was Love who had halted her on that flower-set frontier; the password, which she had not known then, was "Love." Love had laughed at her but had granted her right of way across that border into the Land of Dreams. And now, unchallenged, save by her own heart, she had come once more to the borderland of flowers.

"Halt!" said her heart, alert; "who goes there?"

"It is I, Karen, wearing the strange, new name of Love——"

She lifted her head, drew one hand swiftly across her eyes as though to clear them, then stepped free from the arm that encircled her.

"Karen——"

"Yes, I—I do love you," she stammered—"with all—all my heart——"

"*Halt!*" rang out a voice like a pistol shot from the darkness.

The girl stood rigid; Guild sprang to her side. "Qui vive!" cried the voice.

"Belgium!" said Guild coolly.

"Then who goes there!—you!—below there in that garden?"

"Friends to Belgium," replied Guild in a quiet and

very grave voice. "Don't move, dearest," he whispered.

"What is happening?"

"I don't know, yet."

Presently, nearer the balustrade above them, the voice came again: "Is it Monsieur Guild?"

"Yes. Who are you?"

"Pardon. Will Monsieur come up to the terrace? I am watching the wall beyond the pool."

They ascended the stone steps; Karen moving lightly beside him. In the shadow of the clipped yews a dark form stirred.

"Pardon. I did not recognize Monsieur Guild nor Mademoiselle. There is trouble."

It was Schultz the herdsman; his rifle was in his hand and he wore two cartridge-belts crossed over his smock en bandoulière.

He touched his hat to Karen, but turned immediately toward the star-lit sky-line where the dark coping of the wall cut it.

"What is the trouble?" asked Guild with a sinking heart.

"God knows how it happened, Monsieur Guild—but there was bad blood tonight and hot heads full of it. Then, very far in the forest, a shot was fired."

"I heard it. What happened?"

"Listen, Monsieur! The Moresnet man and the boy, Jean Pascal, put their heads together. I don't know how it was, but even after what you said to us, and after Michaud told us to remain prudent and calm,

"Standing so beside the pool, breathing the incense of the roses, she thought of the dream"

somehow after we heard that shot we all, one by one, took down our guns; and after a little while we found ourselves together in the carrefour.

"And from there we went, without saying a word, to the Calvary on the hill pasture road. It was as though each of us understood without telling each other—without even hinting at a plan.

"And by and by we went down by the rivulet at the foot of the hill pastures, and there, as we expected, were two of the Yslemont refugees. They had their guns. And one of them had a *spiked helmet*."

"Go on," said Guild, compressing his lips.

"He had taken it near Trois Fontaines, not below the hill. We all examined it. We saw red, Monsieur. Then a calf which had escaped the Grey Wolves moved in the bushes near us. The Moresnet man caught it, and he and the shepherd, little Jean Pascal, took the dumb beast and tied it to a sapling near the road. On *our* side of the boundary! But we all knew what might happen."

There was a silence; then Schultz said in a low, hoarse voice: "It was fated to be. We took both sides of the road in the long grasses of the ditches. And the calf bawled for company.

"The company came after a while—two Grey Wolves. First we heard the clink-clink of their horses' feet; then we saw their lances against the sky.

"They came on, picking their way. And of a sudden the electric breast-torch on one of them breaks out like a blinding star, plays over the road, then

lights up the calf which is terrified and backs into the hedge.

"He drives his lance-butt into the sod and gets out of his saddle. His comrade sits the other horse, pistol lifted, elbow on thigh. And there comes then another Uhlan, walking and leading his horse—three of the dirty brigands, Monsieur, across the border and on our side!"

"Go on."

"Eh bien—we bled them!"

"You killed them?"

"Yes, Monsieur—two there by the hedge in the grassy ditch; the other hung to his horse for a while—but came off sideways. One spur caught and his horse took him back that way—across the border."

"Go on."

"We took their schapskas. Jean Pascal wished to go across the border after more Wolves. He was crazy. And the blood made us all a little drunk. And then we found that the Moresnet man had gone. That chilled us."

He wiped his face with his sleeve, never taking his eyes from the wall across the garden.

"After that," he said, "we lay very still, watching. And in a little while an Uhlan crossed the hill pasture walking his horse slowly against the stars. Then there were others moving across the sky up there, and we also heard others on the road. So we have been quietly falling back into the forest where, if they follow, they shall not go back, please God!"

"Where is Michaud?"

"He was very angry, but, since the affair has really begun, he is with us, of course."

"Where is he?"

"He went to the house to find you an hour ago."

Guild bit his lip in silence. The stupidity of what had been done, the utter hopelessness of the situation sickened him.

The slow, groping peasant mind, occupied always with the moment's problem only, solving it by impulse and instinct alone—what could be done with such a mind—what could be hoped from it except under patiently inculcated military discipline.

Loosened from that, and defending its property from actual or threatened aggression, it became a furtive, fierce and quickened mind, alternately cunning and patiently ferocious. But of reason, or of logic, it reckons nothing, knows nothing.

Trouble had begun—trouble was abroad already in the star-light—moving, menacing.

"What is your word?" he asked bluntly.

"Yslemont."

He turned to Karen, who stood quietly beside him: "The ladies must leave this house tonight. There is no time at all to waste. There is going to be real trouble here by morning. And I am going to ask you if you will give these American ladies shelter tonight at Quellenheim. Will you, Karen?"

"Of course."

"From there they can go to the city of Luxembourg

tomorrow, and so into Holland. But they ought to go now."

"And you, Kervyn?"

"I shall be very busy," he said. "Come back to the house, now."

They walked away together, moving quickly along the beech-woods; she with that youthful, buoyant step as lithe as a young boy's; he beside her with grave, preoccupied face and ears alert for the slightest sound.

"Kervyn?"

"Yes."

"Will you come back to Quellenheim, too?"

"I can't do that, dearest."

"May I ask you what you are going to do?"

"Dear, I don't know yet. I haven't formed any plan at all."

"Is it not very dangerous for you to remain here?"

"No, I think not. . . . That is—I shall see how this matter threatens to develop."

He felt her hand lightly on his arm, looked around, halted. She came to him, laid her cheek against his breast in silence.

"You must not be afraid for me, Karen."

"I shall try—to remember."

He lifted one of her hands. It was cold and delicately fragrant. He kissed it.

"The Bank at Diekirch is my address. I shall try to write you. I shall come back some day and marry you. Do you love me, Karen?"

"With all—all my—soul."

"And you will marry me?"

"Yes, Kervyn."

She looked up, her eyes brilliant as wet stars. And very gently, almost timidly, they exchanged their betrothal, lip to lip.

He drew her to him a little closer—held her so a moment, scarcely in contact. Then they turned again to the grassy ride and moved swiftly forward toward the drive.

Every light in the house had been lit, apparently. The automobile stood before the door; three forest waggons with their big fine horses were in line behind; and servants were loading them with American trunks, suitcases, and luggage of every description, under the active direction of Darrel.

When he saw Guild and Karen coming he called out: "Your luggage is packed! Mrs. Courland and Valentine and their two maids are filling hampers with bed linen and knick-knacks. You've heard what's happened, of course?"

"Yes," said Guild. "I don't think you had better waste any more time packing. Let the ladies get into the car and start. Michaud and I can gather up what's left of their effects and send it after them in the last waggon! Where is Michaud?"

"Talking to Mrs. Courland inside. Here he comes, now!——"

The white-haired forester came out behind Mrs. Courland, caught sight of Guild, and made a slight gesture expressing infinite despair.

"I know," said Guild. "I'll talk it over with you after the household leaves." And to Mrs. Courland, who appeared calm but a trifle dazed: "Miss Girard offers you Quellenheim for the night, and for longer if you desire."

"Please," said Karen, coming forward—"it would be very gracious of you to come. Will you, Mrs. Courland?"

"Thank you, dear—yes—it will be the greatest convenience. I don't know when we should arrive at Luxembourg if we started now." She took one of Karen's hands and turned to Guild: "What a terrible thing our people have done! Michaud came to tell us; Harry started everybody packing up. You will come with us, of course?"

"Perhaps later, thank you." He turned to Valentine who was coming out in hat and coat, followed by a pale-faced maid carrying both arms full of wraps.

"Please don't lose any time," said Guild, selecting wraps for Mrs. Courland and for Karen. "Are your servants ready?"

"Nobody is ready," said Valentine, "but everybody is here or in the hall, I think."

Guild gave his arm to Mrs. Courland and helped that active young matron spring into the touring car. Karen went next. Valentine and two maids followed; Guild slammed the door.

"All right!" he said curtly to the chauffeur, then, hat in hand, he said gaily: "Au revoir! A happy reunion for us all!"

As the car rolled out into the shining path of its own lamps Karen turned and looked back at him. And as long as he could see her she was looking back.

After the car followed two of the forest waggons, one filled with servants, the other loaded with luggage. Darrel came out of the house with the last odds and ends of property belonging to the Courlands and flung it pell-mell into the last waggon.

"Come on," he said briskly to Guild.

"No, go ahead, Harry. I'm stopping to talk with Michaud——"

"Well how are you going to get to Quellenheim?"

"When I'm ready to go I'll get there."

"You're not coming?"

"Not now."

Darrel came over and said, dropping his voice: "After this murdering business it won't do for *you* to be caught here."

"I don't mean to be caught here. Don't worry—and get a move on!"

"What are you intending to do?"

"I don't know yet. Come, Harry, start that waggon!"

Darrel shrugged his shoulders, mounted the seat beside the driver, and the forest waggon rolled away into the darkness.

Guild was still looking after it, listening to Michaud's report of the sniping affair near Trois Fontaines, when he saw the figure of a man walking back from the direction the waggon had taken. The man walked with a visible limp.

"You idiot!" said Guild sharply as Darrel strolled up, his features blandly defiant.

"Go on with what you were saying to Michaud," insisted Darrel, unruffled by his reception.

"Come, Harry—this is downright damn foolishness. If you've let the waggon go on, you'll have to foot it to Quellenheim. You can't stay here!"

"Why?"

"Because, you infernal butter-in, you'll get mixed up in a particularly nasty mess. And it doesn't concern Yankees, this mess we're in, Michaud and I."

"Oh hell!" said Darrel; "go on and talk, Michaud!"

"Are you going to poke your nose into this?" demanded Guild.

"It's in now."

"See here, Harry! Your sticking by me is gratuitously silly and it annoys me. You don't have to. This isn't any of your business, this mess."

Darrel lighted a cigarette and sat down on the terrace steps. Guild glared at him.

"Will you go to the devil!" he snapped out.

"No, I won't."

Michaud, perplexed, had remained silent.

"If things go wrong they'll make a clean sweep of us all, I tell you," said Guild. "Once more, Harry, will you mind your own business?"

"No," said Darrel, blandly.

Guild turned to Michaud: "What were you saying?"

The forester, controlling his anger and emotion, continued the story of the sniper near Trois Fontaines.

Then he outlined the miserable affair of the hill pasture.

"There remains for us now only two courses," he ended. "Either we turn franc-tireur and make our bivouac yonder in the forest, or we gather our people at The Pulpit, lie there tonight, and at daylight strike out for the Dutch frontier."

Guild nodded.

"There is a little hole in the rocks at The Pulpit—scarce large enough to be called a cave. Since the war came upon us, foreseeing necessity, my men have carried arms and provisions to The Pulpit—well hidden, Monsieur. I think, now, that it is a better refuge than this house."

The three men looked up at the house. Michaud made a hopeless gesture: "I suppose *they* will destroy it, now. God knows. But if Monsieur Paillard be truly dead as we now believe, and his poor body lies rotting under the ruins of Wiltz-la-Vallée, then there is nobody to mourn this house excepting the old forester, Michaud. . . . And I think he has lived on earth too long."

He went slowly toward the house, entered it. One by one all the lighted windows grew dark. Presently he reappeared drawing the door-key from his pocket. Very deliberately he locked the door from the outside, looked in silence at the darkened house, and, facing it, quietly removed his hat.

The silent salute lasted but a moment; he put on his grey hat with the pheasant's feather sticking up behind, picked up his fowling-piece and hung it over one

shoulder, his big, weather-browned hand resting on the sling.

"Eh bien, Messieurs?" he inquired calmly.

"Bring in your men, Michaud," said Guild. "I know where The Pulpit is, but I couldn't find it at night. I'll wait at the carrefour for you." And, to Darrel: "What did you do with my luggage?"

"Sent it to Quellenheim."

"*That rücksack, too?*"

"Yes."

"Damnation," said Guild very calmly; "it had papers in it which are enough to hang anybody!"

"You'd better go and get it, then."

"I'll have to, that's all."

They walked across the lawn and out along the dark drive in silence. Where the ride crossed at the carrefour they halted. There was a dilapidated shrine there to Our Lady of Lesse. They seated themselves on the stone base.

"Harry," said Guild, "how long do you intend to follow me about in this absurd way?"

"I'd like to see you safe across the Dutch frontier."

"Thanks," said Guild drily.

"Don't mention it. I really can reconcile myself to your having your bally head knocked off in uniform, but this sort of thing seems rather ghastly."

"It is. Won't you go on to Quellenheim to oblige me?"

"I'll wait till tomorrow morning," replied Darrel pleasantly.

Guild was silent. They sat there for an hour or more scarcely exchanging a word. Then somebody whistled, cautiously, very near them, and another carefully modulated whistle answered.

"Who goes there!" came a challenging voice.

"Yslemont!"

"Our men," said Guild, rising.

Michaud came up in the darkness. "The shepherd, Jean Pascal, and Schultz, and the men of Yslemont are out there yet. Nothing I say affects them. They say that they need another Uhlan to bleed. Imbeciles!"

"Won't they obey you?"

"No, by God! The two sheep dogs of Jean are there, grave and wise as two big-eared devils squatting. And the half-crazed lad is teaching them to track Uhlans—making them sniff the bloody schapskas like a hunter who trains pups with a dead hare!"

He looked around at the dozen shadowy figures gathering in the carrefour; the star-light sparkled on guns and belts and slings, and here and there on the vizor of a casquette-de-chasse.

"The Grey Wolves," said Michaud, "can never find us in The Pulpit. If Monsieur is ready?"

"Quite ready," said Guild. And the shadowy file, led by Michaud, moved straight into the woods.

CHAPTER XXII

DRIVEN GAME

THE stars had faded; a watery grey light glimmered through the forest. Deer crossed the grassy carrefour by the shrine, picking a dainty way toward forest depths; rabbits hopped homeward through dew-drenched ferns and bracken; a cock-pheasant saluted the dawn; the last wild boar still lingered amid the beech mast, rooting, coughing, following the furrows that his bristly snout was making while his furry bat-like ears, cocked forward, remained on duty, and his tail wriggled pleasurably.

The silent watchers aloft behind the rocky escarpement of The Pulpit, looking down through leafy branches to the carrefour, saw the last little roedeer trot past on his fastidious way; saw the last rabbit vanish in the warren; saw the lone boar lift his huge and shaggy head to listen with piggish suspicion, then turn and go, silent as some monstrous spectre.

From under hazel bushes pheasants stepped out to ruffle and preen and peck pensively among the fallen leaves, awaiting the promise of the sun, their white collars gleamed below their gorgeous heads; the sombre

splendour of their plumage made brilliant spots along the ride. Here and there a hen-pheasant crept modestly about the business of breakfast. A blue and rosy jay alighted near, sign that the forest peace promised to endure.

After a long while far in the west the grey was touched with rose. Darrel, lying beside Guild, chin on his folded arms, stirred slightly.

"Sunrise," he said.

Michaud, on the other side, reared himself on his hands and lay watching the west.

"It is too early for the sun," he said. "That is a fire."

Pinker, ruddier, redder grew the western sky. Silent, intent, forester, garde-de-chasse, charcoal burner, strained their keen eyes.

Then a heavy sigh like a groan escaped Michaud.

"The Lodge," he said, hoarsely, under his breath. "Oh God, my master's home."

All around among the rocks men were drawing deep breaths, muttering, restless; their eyes were fixed like the eyes of caged wild things.

"The Grey Wolves," growled an old garde—"Ah, the cowards—the dirty Prussian whelps! Ah! Look at that; my God! Marie adored, Virgin of Lesse; stand by us now!"

Against the sky specks like tinsel twinkled; smoke became visible.

"House, stables, granneries, quarters, garage, all are on fire," said Michaud in a mechanical voice. His

face was grey and without expression, his words accentless.

The smoke appeared further north.

"The cattle-barns and the hay-stacks," he went on monotonously. . . . Beyond are the green-houses, runs, dove-cotes, and our little shop. . . . They are now afire . . . Everything is on fire. Lesse is burning, burning. . . . The stubble beyond is burning. . . . And beyond that the nursery acres—the seedlings and the—Marie adored, Virgin of Lesse, have pity on my little trees—my nurslings—my darlings——"

"Hark!" whispered Guild. Far away up the ride horses were coming at a heavy trot; and now the noise of wheels became audible. And now below them two German dragoons cantered into view, carbines poised; a waggon passed—a strange grey vehicle driven by a grey-clad soldier wearing a vizorless forage cap. It was piled with dead pigeons and chickens. Behind that another waggon followed, all splashed with blood, and in it swayed and jolted the carcasses of dead pigs freshly killed, lurching and slipping over the crimsoned straw. Behind galloped six Uhlans, their lances perpendicular in the buckets, the cords from their cloth-covered schapskas bellying behind.

"Not a shot!" said Michaud in a perfectly distinct voice, pushing up the rifle of the old garde-de-chasse. "There is nothing to do now, nom de Dieu!—for the necks of our fowls are already wrung and the dead hogs are tasting their own *boudin*. Our affair is with the living pigs."

After a few moments more dragoons came, trotting their superb horses along the ride, alertly scanning the woods to right and left as they passed, their carbines at a ready.

Waggons followed—hay waggons, carts loaded with potato sacks, straw, apples, bags of flour, even firewood and bundles of faggots—a dozen vehicles or more of every description.

"Ours," said Michaud in his emotionless tones. "What they could not take is burning yonder."

More grey dragoons closed the file of waggons, then a dozen Uhlans, who turned frequently in their saddles and kept looking back.

"Scoundrels!" muttered the garde-de-chasse, laying his rifle level; but Michaud turned on him and struck up the weapon.

"Thou!" he said coldly—"do thy duty when I tell thee, or I become angry."

Somebody said: "There are no more. We have not bled one single wolf!"

"Look yonder," whispered Guild.

Out into the carrefour stepped briskly eight or ten German officers, smart and elegant and trim in their sea-grey uniforms and their spiked helmets shrouded with grey so that there was not a glitter from point to spur.

A dozen non-commissioned officers followed, carrying two military rifles apiece.

The officers looked curiously at the shrine of Our Lady of Lesse, and the sad-faced Virgin looked back at them out of her carven and sightless eyes.

One by one the officers took posts at the four corners of the grassy clearing or on the steps of the shrine. They were laughing and conversing; some smoked; some inspected the rifles brought up by their non-com gun-bearers. The sun had not yet risen; the silvery smoke of the Silverwiltz marked its high waterfall below the gorge of the glen; fern fronds drooped wet to the wet dead leaves beneath, matted grasses glistened powdered with dew.

In the still grey air of morning the smoke from the German officers' pipes and cigars rose upward in straight thin bands; a jeweled bracelet on the wrist of an infantry major reflected light like a frost crystal.

The officers ceased their careless conversation; one by one they became quiet, almost motionless where they had taken their several positions. Behind them, stiff and erect, the non-coms stood with the spare guns, rifles or fowling-pieces.

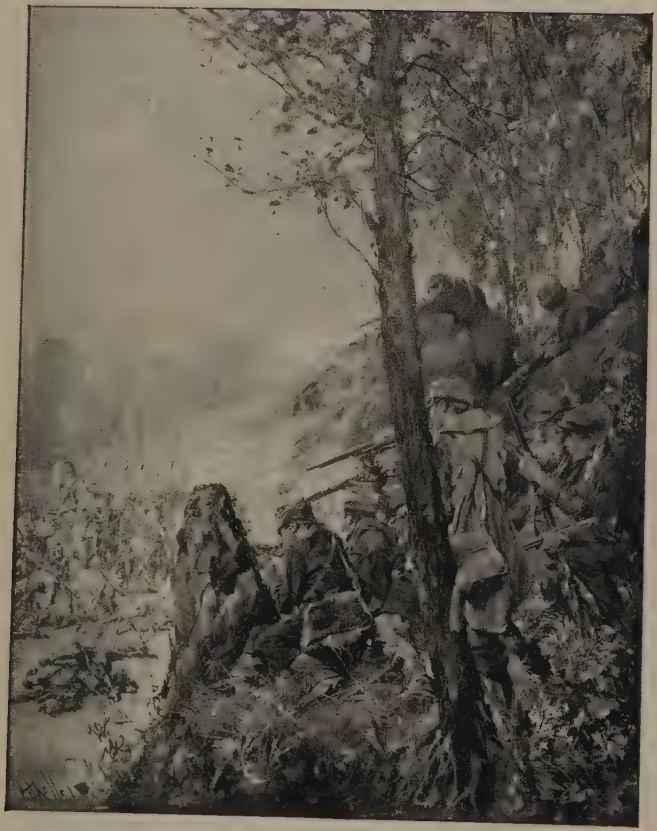
An air of silent expectancy settled over the carre-four; officer and non-com were waiting for something.

Michaud had already divined; Guild knew; so did Darrel. Every woodsman in The Pulpit knew. Some of them were trembling like leashed dogs.

Then in the forest a sound became audible like a far halloo. Distant answers came through the woodland silence, from north, from south—then from west and east.

Guild whispered to Darrel: "They are driving the forest! They have a regiment out to beat it!"

The German officers at their stands no longer moved



"The Pulpit resounded with the rifle-fire of its little garrison"

as much as a finger. Against the grey trees they were all but invisible.

Suddenly out into the carrefour stepped a superb red stag, ears alert, beautiful head half turned at gaze. Instantly a rifle spoke; and the magnificent creature was down in the ride, scuffling, scrambling, only to fall and lie panting with its long neck lifted a little.

Crack! The antlered head fell.

Then out of the wood trotted three bewildered pigs—an old boar, a yearling on which the stripes were still visible, and a huge fierce sow. A ripple of rifle shots checked them; the old boar stood swinging his great furry head right and left; the yearling was down, twitching; the sow ran, screaming horribly. Two shots followed; the old boar kneeled down very quietly like a trick-horse in a circus, still facing his enemies. He did not look as though he were dead.

The yearling had ceased its twitching; the sow was down, too, a great lump of coarse black fur in the ditch.

Then the rifles began again; a company of little roe deer whirled into the ride and went down or stumbled with delicate limbs dangling broken, or leaped to a height incredible in the agony of a death wound.

Pell-mell after them galloped a whole herd of red deer; the German rifles rattled steadily. Now and then blasts from fowling-pieces dropped running or incoming pheasants, cock and hen alike; or crumpled up some twisting rabbit or knocked a great hare head over heels.

Faster and faster came the terrified wild things, stag, roe, boar, and hare; steadily the German rifles cracked

and rattled out death; thicker and swifter pelted the meteor flight of pheasants; birds of all sorts came driving headlong in their flight; big drab-tinted wood-pigeons, a wild duck or two, widgeon and mallard; now and then a woodcock fluttered past like some soft brown bat beating the air; now and then a coq-de-la-bruyere, planing on huge bowed wings above collapsed and fell heavily to the loose roar of the fowling-pieces.

Crippled, mutilated creatures were heaped along the ride; over them leaped their panic-stricken comrades only to stumble in the rifle-fire and lie struggling or inert.

A veil of smoky haze made the carrefour greyer now, through which at intervals a dying stag lifted its long neck from the shambles about him or some strong feathered thing beat its broken wings impotently upon the grass.

Once a great boar charged, and was shot to pieces, spattering the steps of the shrine with blood. Once a wounded hare dragged its tortured body to the shrine, as though for sanctuary. A non-com swung it crashing against the granite cross.

And now a more sinister thing occurred. Out from the forest, amid the stampeding game, reeled *a man!* His blue smock hung in ribbons; one bleeding fist grasped a rifle; the cartridges en bandoulière glittered.

For a second he stood there, swaying, panting, bewildered in the smoke haze; then three non-coms fired at him at once.

At that he straightened up, stood so for a second as

though listening, then he took one uncertain step and pitched into a patch of briers on his face.

Presently some German foot-soldiers appeared in the ride, moving cautiously, scanning every ditch, every hollow, every thicket, their rifles poised for a snap-shot. A roebuck floundered up and went off before them like the wind, unnoticed. Then one of the soldiers fired, and a boy jumped out from behind a hazel bush and started to run along the edge of the woods. He was followed by two sheep dogs.

"Jean Pascal!" said Michaud calmly. "May God pardon him now."

As the little shepherd ran, the soldiers stood and fired at him, aiming carefully. They broke his leg as he passed the carrefour. The lad raised himself from the ground to a sitting position and was sobbing bitterly, when they shot him again. That time he fell over on his side, his hands still covering his dead and tear-wet face. His dogs trotted around him, nuzzling him and licking his hands. An officer shot them both.

Schultz broke cover in a few moments, his rifle at his cheek; and, dropping to one knee in the ride, he coolly opened fire on the officers by the shrine. But he had time only for a single shot which jerked a spiked helmet from a cavalry major's clipped head. Then they knocked him flat.

As the herdsman lay gasping in the roadway with a bullet in his stomach, looking with dull and glazing eyes at the rifle flashes, three men from Yslemont—

blackened, haggard, ragged creatures—burst out, fighting like wildcats with the beaters behind them.

Two were bayoneted and clubbed to death in the briers; the last man ran like a crazed hare, doubling, dodging, twisting among the trees where the rifle hail filled the air with twigs and splinters and tattered leaves.

After him lumbered a dozen foot-soldiers, clumping along in their hob-nailed ammunition boots. Then, high above on The Pulpit, Guild spoke sharply to Michaud, who gave a jerk to his white head and made a little gesture to the others behind him.

"Now," added Guild in a low voice.

"Fire," said Michaud calmly.

The rocky glen roared with the volley. The foot-soldiers below halted in astonishment and looked up. One fell sideways against a tree; another dropped to his knees and remained motionless, the spike of his helmet buried deep in the soft earth.

They were shouting down by the carrefour now; clear, mellow whistle signals sounded persistently. Horses were coming, too; the ride reverberated with their galloping. And all the while The Pulpit resounded with the rifle-fire of its little garrison, and soldiers were dropping along the carrefour and the ride.

"Pigs of Prussians!" shouted the old garde-de-chasse; "does a Belgian game-drive suit you now! Ah, scoundrels, bandits, sound the *Mort* on your imbecile whistles. For the swine of the North are dying fast!"

"Be silent," said Michaud coldly. "You tarnish your own courage!"

Guild and Darrel had taken rifles; they stood firing down at the carrefour where the horses of the Uhlan advanced guard were plunging about in disorder under a confusion of lances and fluttering pennons.

But the confusion lasted only a few moments; horsemen whirled their mounts and cleared out at full speed; the carrefour was empty of officers now; not a German was visible in the early sunshine, only the steady clatter of their rifle-fire continued to pelt the heights where bullets cracked and smacked on the rocks.

"Enough," said Michaud quietly. "It is time to leave. André, bring thou a bar to me."

A charcoal burner ran to the hole in the rocks and drew out a crowbar. Michaud took it, shoved it under the edge of the ledge, found a fulcrum, motioned the men back.

Two other men threw their weight on the bar; the ledge lifted easily. Suddenly the entire parapet gave way, crashing like an avalanche into the glen below.

"They shall need wings who follow us," said the old man grimly. "Monsieur," turning calmly to Guild, "if we cross the Dutch border unarmed, will they interne us?"

"No, I think not."

"And from there we may be free to find our way to the colours?"

"Yes."

"By sea?"

"By land and sea to Dunkirk. I know of no easier or quicker way."

"Monsieur goes with us?"

"First I must stop at Quellenheim." He added, in a low voice: "By mistake my papers were sent there last night. Our King must see those papers."

"Bien," said Michaud. "We bivouac near Quellenheim tonight—time for a crust, Monsieur, while you go to the house and return. Is it agreeable to Monsieur?"

"Perfectly." And, to Darrel: "Take your chance while it remains and join the Courlands when they leave Quellenheim. Will you promise?"

"I'll see," said Darrel, carelessly tossing his rifle across his shoulder and stepping into the silent file of men which was already starting across the ridge.

CHAPTER XXIII

CANDLE LIGHT

IT was nearly eleven o'clock at night before they bivouacked without fires in the woods behind the Lodge at Quellenheim.

The circuitous forest route had wearied the men; they threw themselves on the dead leaves and moss; some slept where they lay, others groped in sacks with toil-stiffened fingers searching for crusts, which they munched slowly, half asleep.

Guild drew Darrel and Michaud aside.

"To go by Luxembourg and Holland is too long and too uncertain," he said. "If we could cross the railway beyond Trois Fontaines before daylight we should have a clear country before us to Antwerp."

It had been days since the household at Lesse had heard any war news, but Darrel recollected that there had been rumours of a German drive toward Antwerp.

Michaud nodded. "It is possible," he said. "Brussels they may have taken; I don't know; but Antwerp, never! I *know*, Monsieur; I served my time with the artillery in the Scheldt forts. No German army could pass the outer ring of fortresses; the coun-

try can be flooded. Also our King is there with his Guides and Lancers and Chasseurs-à-cheval; the entire army is there. No, Monsieur, Antwerp is open to us if you desire to take us there."

"I do," said Guild. "It is the better way for all of us if the country still remains clear. It is better for us than to engage in a Chasse aux Uhlans. If I could lead a dozen sturdy recruits into Antwerp it would be worth while. And, except for the post at Trois Fontaines and the troops patrolling the railway, I can not see why the country is not open to us north of Liège."

"I know this country. It is my country," said Michaud, "and troops or no troops I can take you across the railroad before daylight." He shrugged his massive shoulders: "What is a Prussian patrol to a head forester?"

"You believe you can do it?"

"I pledge my honour, Monsieur."

Guild looked at Darrel: "I wish I knew whether there has been a drive toward Antwerp. If there has been it must have come from the sea by Ostend. But I do not believe Ostend has been taken." He turned to Michaud: "If the country is clear, why could we not pick up more men en route? Why should we not recruit in every hamlet, every village?"

"Mon Dieu, Monsieur, if there are hardy companions willing to go with the ragged men of the forest, well and good. Yet I could wish for at least one uniform among us. That represents authority and gives security."

Guild said thoughtfully: "I have an officer's uniform of the Guides among my luggage."

"Lord!" exclaimed Darrel, "you brought it with you?"

"There was to have been a regimental dinner in Brussels in September. I was asked last June, and they requested me to wear uniform. I had my uniform, so I packed it."

"Then it is there in your luggage at Quellenheim!"

"Yes."

"Well," said Darrel heartily, "I'm devilish glad of it. If they catch you in uniform they can't court-martial you with a jerk of their thumbs."

"I'm not worrying about that," said Guild carelessly, "but," looking at Michaud, "if you think a reserve officer in uniform is likely to encourage recruiting, I certainly shall use my uniform. You know your own people better than I do. I leave it to you, Michaud."

"Then, Monsieur, wear your uniform. It means everything to us all; we honour and respect it; it represents authority; better still, it reassures our people. If an officer of the Guides is seen in charge of a batch of recruits, no young man, whose class has been summoned to the colours, would entertain any misgivings. Nor dare anybody hang back! Our women would jeer and ridicule them."

"Very well," said Guild. "Now take me as far as the wood's edge where I can see the house at Quellenheim. Wait for me there and guide me back here, for I never could find this dark bivouac alone."

"Follow, Monsieur," said the old man simply.

In single file the three men moved forward through the darkness, Michaud leading without hesitation, Guild following close, and Darrel bringing up the rear.

In a few minutes the bluish lustre of the stars broke through the forest's edge. An overgrown ride ran westward; beyond, the highway from Trois Fontaines bisected it; and out of this curved the Lodge road.

It was dark and deserted; and when Guild came in sight of the Lodge, that, too, was dark.

Up the long avenue he hastened to the house; the fountain splashed monotonously in the star-light; the circle of tall trees looked down mournfully; the high planets twinkled.

He walked around the house, hoping to find a light in the kitchen. All was black, silent, and wrapped in profoundest shadow.

He picked up a few pebbles from the driveway, counted the windows until he was certain which one was Karen's. Her window was open. He tossed a pebble against it; and then another into the room itself.

Suddenly the girl appeared at the window.

"Karen!" he called. She leaned out swiftly, her braided hair falling to the sill.

"Kervyn!" she whispered.

"Dear, I've only a moment. Could you come down and let me in without waking the others?"

"The others? Kervyn, they have gone!"

"Gone!"

"Everybody's gone! A patrol of hussars galloped here from Trois Fontaines and ordered them across the Dutch frontier. I felt dreadfully; but there was nothing to do. So poor Mrs. Courland and her daughter and her servants have gone on toward Luxembourg with all their luggage. I'm here alone with the Frau Förster. Shall I let you in?"

"Did my luggage go to Luxembourg?"

"No; it is in the room you occupied."

"Then come down quickly and let me in," he said. "If there are German patrols abroad I don't care to be caught here."

The girl disappeared; Guild went to the front door and stood looking down the driveway and listening to catch any warning sound.

The next moment the door behind him opened and Karen's trembling hands were in his.

He gazed down into the pale face framed by its heavy braids. In her slim nightdress and silken chamber robe she appeared very girlish.

"What has happened, Kervyn? Your clothes are torn and muddy and you look dreadfully white and tired."

"Karen, they burned Lesse this morning."

"Oh!" she gasped.

"Everything at Lesse is in ashes. Some of the men are dead. The survivors are in the woods behind your house waiting for me."

She clung to his arm as they entered the house; Guild picked up one of the lighted candles from the oak table.

She took the other and they ascended the stairs together.

"There was sniping," he said. "That always brings punishment to innocent and guilty alike. Lesse is a heap of cinders; they drove the forest and shot the driven game from the steps of the carrefour shrine. Men fell there, too, under their rifles—the herdsman, Schultz, the Yslemont men, the little shepherd lad with both his dogs. When their bearers came our way we fired on them."

"*You!* Oh, Kervyn! It means death if they find you!"

"I shall not be found." He took her by the hands a moment, smiled at her, then turned swiftly and entered his room holding the candle above his head.

After his door had remained closed for a few moments she knocked.

"Kervyn," she called, "I am frightened and I am going to dress."

"No need of that," came his voice; "I shall be gone in five minutes."

But she went away with her lighted candle and entered her room. The travelling gown she wore from England lay ready; boots, spats, and waist.

Swiftly she unbraided and shook out her hair and twisted it up again, her slim fingers flying. A sense of impending danger seized and possessed her; almost feverishly she flung from her the frail night garments she wore, and dressed with ever-increasing fear of something indefinitely menacing but instant. What it might

be she did not even try to formulate in thought; but it frightened her, and it seemed very, very near.

She dragged on her brown velvet hat and pinned it, and at the same moment she heard a sound in the hallway which almost stopped her heart.

It was the ringing step of a spurred boot.

Terrified, she crept to her door, listened, opened a little way. Near the stair-head a candle shone, its yellow light glimmering on the wall of the passage. Then she heard Guild's guarded voice:

"Karen?"

"Y-yes," she faltered in amazement as a tall figure turned toward her clothed in the complete uniform of the Guides.

"Kervyn! Is it *you?* Why are you in that uniform?" She came toward him slowly, her knees still tremulous from fear, and rested one hand on his arm.

"Dearest, dearest," he said gently, "why are you trembling? There is no reason for fear. I am in uniform because I shall attempt to take a few recruits and volunteers across the railway line tonight. We are going to try to make Antwerp, which is a quicker, and I think a surer, route than through Luxembourg and Holland. Besides, they *might* interne us. They would without a doubt if I were in uniform and if the Lesse men came to the frontier with their guns and bandoulières."

"Kervyn, how *can* you get to Antwerp? You can't *walk*, dear!"

"We'll start on foot, anyway," he said cheerfully.

"Now I must go. They're waiting. Why did you dress, Karen?"

"I don't know." She looked up at him in a dazed way. "I wanted to be with you."

"I'm going back to the forest, dear."

"Could I come?"

"No. I don't want you to be out at night. There's only a fireless camp there and a dozen ragged and dirty men. Besides, there might be some sort of trouble."

"Trouble?"

"Not likely. Still there *might* be patrols out from Trois Fontaines, even from Lesse. I don't know. Michaud says he can take us across the railway line before daylight. If he can do that I think we shall find the country clear beyond. Anyway, we'll know soon. Now I must say good-bye."

She laid her cold hands in his, tried to speak, but could not. Then, of a sudden, her fingers gripped his in terror; there came the rushing swish of an automobile around the gravel circle outside, a loud resonant humming, a sharp voice speaking in German, a quick reply in the same tongue.

"The—the valet's room. Quick!" she gasped, pushing him backward across the room and through the doorway. Behind him the swinging leather door closed silently again; the girl stood rigid, white as a sheet, then she walked to the oak table, picked up a book, and dropped into the depths of a leather arm-chair.

Outside the mellow whirr of the motor had ceased; the door of the car closed with a click; quick, firm steps

ascended the path; there came a low jingling sound, the clash of metal, then a key was rattled in the outer lock, turned sharply, and the door creaked open.

Karen rose to her feet. Every atom of colour had fled her cheeks.

"Karen!"

"You?" she said in a ghost of her own voice.

Kurt von Reiter seemed astonished. He came forward very quickly, a tall, thin, faultless figure moulded perfectly into his tight sea-grey uniform. Bending only a very little from the waist as though too tightly buttoned in, he bowed above the icy hand she extended, paid his respects with flawless courtesy, straightened up, placed his shrouded spiked helmet on the table.

"I had scarcely expected to find you awake," he said. "It is after two o'clock in the morning."

She made a supreme effort at self-control.

"I have been a trifle nervous, Kurt. There was trouble at Lesse Forest last evening."

"Yes. Who told you?"

"I was there."

"At Lesse!"

"Yes, a guest of Mrs. Courland—an American lady."

"I know about her. She is a friend of Mr. Guild."

Karen nodded; a painful and fixed smile quivered in her colourless lips.

"Was Mr. Guild there also?" inquired von Reiter.

"Yes."

"He left with the others, I suppose."

She said: "Everybody was in a panic. I invited

them to come here, but a patrol from Trois Fontaines galloped up and ordered them to go through Luxembourg—across the Dutch frontier. It seemed very harsh."

The girl had seated herself again; von Reiter drew up a chair beside the table opposite her and sat down. Candle light played over his dry, sandy-blond face and set his blue eyes glittering.

"Are you well, Karen?"

"Quite, thank you. And you?"

"God be thanked, in perfect health." He did not mention three broken ribs still bandaged and which had interfered with the perfectly ceremonious bow of a German officer.

He said: "I took this opportunity to come. It was my first chance to see you. Been travelling since noon."

"You—remain tonight?"

"I can not. I came for one reason only. You know what it is, Karen."

She did not answer.

He waited a moment, looked absently around the room, glanced up at the stag's antlers, then his gaze returned to her.

"Were you much frightened by what happened at Lesse?" he asked. "You do not look well."

"I am well."

"Did you experience any trouble in leaving England?"

"Yes, some."

"And Mr. Guild? Was he—useful?"

"Yes."

Von Reiter gazed at the girl thoughtfully. One elbow rested on the table corner, the clenched fist supporting his chin. In the other hand he continued to crumple his gloves between lean, powerful, immaculate fingers.

"Karen," he said, "did you bring with you whatever papers you happened to possess at the time?"

After a moment the girl answered in a low voice: "No."

"Did you destroy them?"

"No."

"What became of them?" he insisted. A mottled flush gathered on his cheek-bones; after a few seconds the carefully scrubbed features of the man grew pink.

"What papers had you?" he asked.

She looked up at him in silence and a deeper colour stained his face so that in contrast his pale mustache, en croc, and his clipped hair appeared almost white.

"Kurt," she said, "how could you permit me to be involved in such matters?"

"Karen, do you imagine I supposed that war with England was imminent? I never dreamed that England would intervene! And when she did, and when it was already too late to reach you, the anxiety concerning you, and concerning what papers might still be passing from the Edmeston Agency through your hands, nearly drove me insane."

"Yet you instructed me to bring back with me any papers I might have in my possession."

"I tell you I did not count on war with England.

Nobody did. I meant only that you were to bring with you what papers you had when you returned. Did not Grätz instruct you to destroy your papers?"

"No."

Von Reiter's lean jaws snapped. "Then what did you do with them?"

"I put them into my satchel. On board the steamer the satchel was opened and the papers taken."

Anger, apprehension, twitched at his thin lips; then a deeper emotion softened the grim lines of his features.

"God be thanked," he said, "that you were not involved in England. It was a living nightmare to me—that constant uncertainty concerning you. I could not reach you; I could do nothing, make no arrangements. Cipher code was forbidden even from neutral countries. It was only at the last moment I found a secret wireless lane still open to us. In that way I managed to notify Grätz that this man Guild was on his way to find you and bring you back here; that no more papers were to be sent through you to me; and that what you had were to be destroyed. Did you hear from him at all?"

"He telephoned that my maid had been arrested on a serious charge and that I was to leave Hyacinth Villa at once with Mr. Guild. He said nothing about papers. But I remembered what I had promised you, and I put into my satchel what papers I had. . . . They nearly lost me my life," she added, gazing steadily at him.

"Do you mean to say that you knew the papers were

compromising and still you undertook to bring them? Were you insane to attempt such a thing?"

"Had I not promised you, Kurt?"

"Circumstances alter conditions and absolve promises however solemn. Common sense decides where honour is involved."

She flushed brightly: "There I am more English than German, Kurt. A promise is a promise, and not"—she looked at him musingly—"not what the British press reproaches us for calling a 'scrap of paper.' "

He said grimly: "When a supposed friend suddenly aims a blow at you, strike first if you can and discuss the ethics afterward. We tore up that 'scrap of paper' before the dirty fingers of England could clutch it, that's all."

"And lost the world's sympathy. Oh, Kurt!"

"But we retained the respect born of fear. We invaded Belgium before the others could do it, that's all. . . . I do not care to discuss the matter. The truth is known to us and that is sufficient."

"It is not sufficient if you desire the sympathy of the world."

Von Reiter's eyes became paler and fixed and he worried the points of his up-brushed mustache with powerful, lean fingers.

"Make no mistake," he said musingly. "America's turn will come. . . . For all the insolence she has offered in our time of need, surely, surely the time is coming for our reckoning with her. We have not forgotten von Diederichs; we shall not forget this crisis.

All shall be arranged with method and order when we are ready. . . . Where is that American—or Belgian, as he seems to think his honour of the moment requires him to be?"

"Mr. Guild?"

"Yes."

"He did not come here when the others arrived from Lesse Forest."

"He's a fire-brand," said von Reiter coldly. "Our system of information informed us sufficiently. I should have had him extinguished at Yslemont had he not been the one man who stood any chance of getting into England and bringing you back."

"Also you trusted him," she said quietly.

"Yes, I did. He is a Gueldres of Yvoir. The Gueldres have never lied. When he said he'd return, that settled the matter." Von Reiter's eyes had an absent look as though following a detached idea, and his features became expressionless.

"When the war ends," he said, "and if that man ever comes to Berlin, it would afford me gratification to offer him my hand—or my card. Either extreme would suit me; he is not a man to leave one indifferent; it is either friendship or enmity—the hand or the card. And I do not know yet which I might prefer."

He looked up and around at her, his sombre, blond features hardening:

"I need not ask you whether his attitude toward you was respectful."

"It was—respectful."

"That question, of course, answered itself. The record of that family is part of Belgian history. . . . Do you know where he went after he kept his word and delivered you here?"

"He went to Lesse."

"And then?"

She remained silent.

"Do you know?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Is there any reason why you should not tell me?"

She was mute.

"Karen," he said gently, "is there any reason why your confidence should be withheld from me? I have come here tonight for my answer. I have only an hour to stay. It was a long way to come for one single word from a young girl. But I would have travelled the world over for that word from you. Will you give me my answer, Karen?"

She looked up, dumb, her mouth tremulous, unable to control her emotion for the moment. His keen eyes searched hers; he waited, thin lips compressed.

"Kurt—I—do not love you," she whispered.

He took it in silence; not a muscle quivered.

"Will you marry me, Karen, and try?"

"I can not."

"Is it your profession? Is it your desire for liberty?"

"No."

"Is it—*another man?*"

As he spoke he saw in her eyes that he had guessed the truth.

For a full minute he sat there like a statue, one arm extended on the table, the bony hand clenched. After a long while he lifted his head and turned upon her a visage terrifying in its pallour and rigidity.

"Is it—Guild?" he asked with an effort.

"Kurt!"

"*Is* it?" The heavy colour suddenly flooded his face; he drew a deep, sharp breath. "Is he still in this neighbourhood? Is he, perhaps, coming here to see you? Is *that* why you are awake and dressed at this hour?"

"Kurt, you have no right——"

"I am at liberty to ask you these questions——"

"No! It is an impertinence——"

"Do you regard it that way? Karen! Is *this* what has happened—" He choked, turned his congested face, glaring about him at the four walls of the room. Suddenly some instinct of suspicion seized him, possessed him, brought him to his feet in one bound. And instantly the girl rose, too.

"I know why you are awake and dressed!" he said harshly. "You *are* expecting him! Are you?"

She could not answer; her breath had deserted her, and she merely stood there, one hand resting on the table, her frightened eyes fixed on the man confronting her.

But at his first step forward she sprang in front of him. She strove to speak; the infernal blaze in his eyes terrified her.

"Is *this* what you have done to me?" he said; and moved to pass her, but she caught his arm, and he halted.

CHAPTER XXIV

A PERSONAL AFFAIR

"MY God!" he said, "it would not surprise me to find him here in the house! . . . He *is* here—or you would never wear a face like that! . . . What do you mean to do, block my way in my own house?" as she confronted him.

"Kurt—" Her white lips merely formed the word.

"*Is* he here? Answer me!"

"I—he——"

"Answer me!"

Behind them a voice broke in quietly: "I'll answer for us all. . . . Don't touch that holster, General! I can kill you first. . . . Now, then, am I to pass that door without violence? . . . Because I'm going to pass it one way or another——"

He came forward, his naked sabre shining in the candle light, his grey eyes level, cool, and desperate.

Von Reiter stared at this tall young fellow in the gay uniform of the Guides. His hand, which had instantly moved toward his holster, remained suspended.

"I am going out of that door," repeated Guild.

"Will General Baron von Reiter be good enough to move aside?"

The German's eyes narrowed. "So," he said very quietly, "it is not to be the hand after all, but an exchange of cards. I am not sorry—" With a movement too swift for the eye to follow, his sword was out and glittering in his hand, and he sprang on Guild, beating at his guard, raining blows like lightning.

The girl had fallen against the table, one hand at her throat as though choking back the bursting cry of fright; her brain rang with the dissonance and metallic clamour; the flashing steel dazzled her. Two oak chairs fell crashing as Guild gave ground under the terrific onslaught; there was not a word spoken, not a sound except the infernal din of the sabres and the ceaseless shifting of armed heels on the floor.

Suddenly von Reiter went down heavily; the doormat slipping under foot had flung him to the floor with a crash across a fallen chair. After a second or two he groaned.

Guild looked down at him, bewildered, sword in hand —watched him as he struggled to his feet. The German was ghastly white. A fit of coughing shook him and he tried to disguise it with his hand.

"Pick up your sabre!" motioned Guild.

Von Reiter stooped, recovered his sword, adjusted the hilt to his hand. He coughed again, and there was a trace of blood on his lips, but his face was dead white. He looked very steadily at Guild.

"Acknowledgments to the Comte d'Yvoir," he said with an effort; and the shadow of a smile touched his thin, grim lips.

"Do I pass?" demanded Guild, as grimly.

Von Reiter started to speak, and suddenly his mouth was full of blood.

"Kurt," cried the girl in an agonized voice, "do you mean to kill him or that he is to kill *you!—here*—before my face?"

"I mean—just—that!"

He sprang at Guild again like a tiger, but Guild was on him first, and the impact hurled von Reiter against the table. His sabre fell clattering to the floor.

For a moment, white as a corpse, he looked at his opponent with sick eyes, then, suddenly faint, he slid into the great leather chair. There was more blood on his lips; Guild, breathing heavily, bent over and looked at him, ignorant of what had happened.

Karen came and took his hand in hers. Then a slight groan escaped him and he opened his eyes.

"Are you badly hurt?" asked Guild.

"I'm a little sick, that's all. I think when I fell some ribs broke—or something——"

"I meant fairly by you," said Guild miserably.

"You played fair. It was bad luck—bad luck—that's all." He closed his pain-sickened eyes: "God, what luck," he mumbled—"really atrocious!"

Guild, still holding his naked sword, drew his automatic with his left hand. Then he looked silently at Karen.

"Can't you leave the house by the garden?" she whispered tremulously.

"The gate is padlocked."

"Kervyn, they'll kill you if you step out of that door!"

Von Reiter, drowsy with pain, opened his eyes:

"No, they won't," he said. "Be kind enough to speak to my aide. I—I'm afraid I'm rather—ill."

He glanced at Guild: "Honour of an officer," he added weakly.

Karen stepped to the door and flung it open.

"Captain!" she called sharply.

A moment later the young hussar aide-de-camp who had escorted Guild to the British lines came clanking in.

He glanced obliquely at Guild and at Karen, but when his eyes fell on von Reiter he stared, astonished. Nevertheless, his spurred heels clicked together at salute.

Von Reiter's eyes became ironical. He looked for a moment at his aide, then his gaze wandered to Karen and to Guild.

"Where do you desire to go?" he asked with an effort.

"To Antwerp."

"The road is still open." And, to the hussar: "Safe conduct for Captain the Comte d'Yvoir across the railway. Write it now."

"And for my comrade, Mr. Darrel, and ten recruits," said Guild quietly.

"And for his comrade, Mr. Darrel, and ten recruits,"

repeated von Reiter in a failing voice. But he was smiling.

"And—for *me!*" said Karen.

Von Reiter's eyes had almost closed; he opened them again, heavily, as she spoke. Karen bent over him:

"Kurt, I must go. I can not remain here now. Besides—I want—my—husband."

"Think well," he said drowsily. "Think diligently—at this moment—solemn—supreme—" He raised himself a little, then relapsed: "God," he murmured, "what luck to meet with under your own roof! . . ." And, to the hussar: "Write it that Miss Karen Girard goes also—if she so desires."

There was a silence. The hussar scribbled on the stamped paper in his tablets. After he had finished he laid the tablets and the fountain pen on von Reiter's knees. Very slowly the latter affixed his signature.

He said to the hussar: "I am ill. Go to Trois Fontaines and bring me a medical officer."

When the hussar had gone and when the whirr of the automobile had died away down the drive, Guild aided the hurt man to a sofa and Karen brought pillows from a bedroom.

He was very thirsty, too, and she gave him water continually. At intervals there were slight signs of mental wandering, perhaps symptoms of pneumonia, from his crushed ribs, for he coughed a great deal and the fever already reddened his blond skin. But in the main his mind seemed to be clear. He opened his light-blue eyes and glanced at Guild continually.

"Bad luck, old chap," he said in English, "but no reflection on you. Just bad luck, bad, very bad! We Germans usually have an ally in God. But the trinity is incomplete without luck."

Guild said in a low voice: "I am really sorry, von Reiter. I hope you will come out all right. God knows I bear you no ill will."

"Many thanks. I shall come out all right. There is much work to do." A ghost of the ironical smile touched his feverish lips again. "And much work to be done after this business in Europe is settled. . . . I mean in America. She must pay her reckoning. She must settle with us Germans. . . . I wish it might come soon—*now!*—while their present administration remains—while yet this dull President and his imbecile and grotesque cabinet ministers are in power. . . . I beg your pardon—seeing you in that uniform made me forget that you are also *Mr. Guild.*"

But the irony in his wearied eyes made it very plain that he had not forgotten.

"Karen?" he said presently. She leaned forward in her chair beside him.

"It was just bad luck, very bad luck," he muttered; "but yours is luck"—he turned his dulled eyes toward Guild—"luck to be envied. . . . Some day I hope it may be—the hand."

"It is now, if you wish," said Guild.

The other shook his head: "Too soon, too soon," he muttered. "Even a German officer has his—limits. Be-

tween you and my luck I'm in a bad way—a very bad mess."

Karen bent over his hand and touched it with her lips.

The fever was gaining; he began to roll his blond head from side to side, muttering of love and luck and of the glory of God and the German Empire. A slight smile remained on his lips.

Before the automobile arrived from Trois Fontaines the fever seized him fiercely. His coughing racked him incessantly now, and the first heavy hemorrhage soaked his grey tunic and undershirt.

They eased him all they could, laying open his broad blond chest and the ribs now terribly discoloured where his fall had crushed them in again under the bandage.

How the man could have risen and come at him again Guild could not understand. He was terribly shocked.

Dreadful sounds came from his laboured breathing; he lay with eyes closed now, one burning hand lying in Karen's.

Toward four o'clock in the morning a far, faint sound penetrated the room.

Von Reiter's eyes opened. "Halt!" he whispered. "Who goes there?"

It was Death. He seemed to understand that, for he sighed very lightly, his hand closed on Karen's, and he lay gazing straight upward with brilliant eyes.

A few moments later there came a rush, a crunching of gravel, the loud purr of the motor outside.

Then Karen opened the door and a medical officer entered the room in haste.

Guild turned to Karen: "I must go to the woods and bring in my men and Darrel. Dearest, are you decided to go with me?"

"I could not remain here now. I do not wish to."

"Then wait for me," he said, and went out into the night.

A few moments later they took von Reiter upstairs to his own room. His mind seemed to clear again for a while and he said feebly but distinctly to his aide-de-camp:

"My daughter and her fiancé, the Comte d'Yvoir, are going to Antwerp for their wedding. I remember that military trains now leave Trois Fontaines by way of Trois Vierges, Liège, and Lesten. We control to Lesten, I think."

"Yes, Excellence."

"Write for me that my daughter and the Comte d'Yvoir shall be accorded transportation as far as we control. You will take them to Trois Fontaines in my automobile; you will make personal requisition of the chef-de-gar for the privacy of a compartment. You will affix to the outside of the compartment a notice that the persons in possession are travelling on my business and under my personal protection, and that they are not to be detained or interfered with in any way. . . . Write it separately to be affixed." His voice was weak but perfectly distinct.

The hussar wrote steadily in his tablets, finished, and waited.

"Hold them while I sign," whispered von Reiter. He signed both orders.

"Take them now. I shall not need the car. I shall be here a long time—a—long—time. I am ill. So inform headquarters by telegraph."

"At orders, Excellence."

Von Reiter closed his eyes: "Say to the Comte d'Yvoir that it was—bad luck—very bad luck. . . . But not—his fault. . . . Tell him I am—contented—that a Gueldres is to marry my—daughter."

The aide saluted. But the sick man said nothing more.

Von Reiter was still unconscious when Guild returned from the forest.

Karen met him on the steps; he drew her aside:

"Dear," he whispered, "there has been more violence during my absence. The Lesse men caught a traitor—a wretched charcoal burner from Moresnet—prowling about their camp.

"They hung him with his own belt. I saw him hanging to a beech-tree.

"Darrel was greatly worried when I told him that the Courlands had been forced to continue on to Luxembourg City. He has gone to the hamlet of Croix to hire a peasant to drive him after them and try to overtake them.

"As for the others, they will not come to Antwerp with me now. They have seen 'red' again; and in spite of all I could do they have started back toward Lesse to 'drive' Uhlans as they saw the wild game driven."

The girl shivered.

Guild made a hopeless gesture: "It means the death of every man among them. The Uhlans will do the hunting and the driving, not the poor, half-crazed peasants. . . . It means the end of Lesse and of every man who had ever called it home."

The hussar appeared at the door. Guild looked up, returned the precise salute, and his careworn features softened as he listened to the instructions and the parting message from the now unconscious officer above.

There was a silence, then:

"Karen," he said quietly, "are you ready?"

"Yes."

The hussar asked whether there was luggage, and learning that there was he sent the chauffeur in to bring out Guild's box and Karen's suit-case and satchel.

The girl ran upstairs to the sick room. They admitted her.

Guild was standing by the car when she returned, a drooping, listless figure, her handkerchief pressed to her face. He gave her his arm and aided her into the car. The hussar stepped in beside the chauffeur.

Dawn was just breaking behind the house; the evergreens stood out, massive and black against the silvering east.

As the car moved slowly out of the gravel circle the first bird twittered.

Guild bent over the girl beside him: "Is he still unconscious?"

"Yes."

"Is there any chance?"

"They don't know. It is the lungs. His body is all crushed in——"

She rested her cheek against his shoulder, weeping, as the great grey car rushed on through the pallour of early dawn.

CHAPTER XXV

WHO GOES THERE!

STRETCHED out flat on the seat of a railway carriage, her tear-marred face buried in her arms, her dishevelled hair tumbled around her neck and shoulders, Karen lay asleep. In that car all the other compartments seemed to be full of Saxon reserve artillery officers, their knobbed helmets shrouded in new grey slips, their new, unwrinkled uniforms suggestive of a very recent importation from across the Rhine.

Ahead, cattle cars, ore cars, and flat cars composed the long train, the former filled with battery horses and cannoniers, the latter loaded with guns, caissons, battery waggons, forges, and camp equipment, all in brand-new grey paint.

Except when the train stopped at some heavily guarded station, nobody came to their compartment. But at all stations officers opened the doors and silently examined Guild's credentials—energetic, quick-moving, but civil men, who, when the credentials proved acceptable, invariably saluted his uniform with a correctness impeccable.

Nevertheless, before the train moved out again, al-

ways there was a group of officers gazing in polite perplexity at the green jacket and forage cap and the cherry-coloured riding breeches of a regiment which, they were perfectly aware, was already in the saddle against them.

At one station Guild was able to buy bread and cheese and fruit. But Karen still slept profoundly, and he did not care to awaken her.

From the car windows none of the tragic traces of war were visible except only the usual clusters of spiked helmets along the line; the inevitable Uhlans riding amid the landscape; slowly moving waggon-trains pursuing roads parallel to the railway; brief glimpses of troops encamped in fields. But nothing of the ravage and desolation which blackened the land farther south was apparent.

In the latitude of Liège, however, Guild could see from the car windows the occasional remains of ruined bridges damming small streams; and here and there roofless and smoke-stained walls, or the blackened debris of some burnt farm or factory or mill.

But the northern Ardennes did not appear to have suffered very much from invasion as far as he could make out; and whether the region was heavily occupied by an invading army he could not determine from the glimpses he obtained out of the car windows.

The line, however, was vigilantly guarded; that he could see plainly enough; but the sky-line of the low rolling country on either side might be the limits of German occupation for all he could determine.

Two nights' constant wakefulness had made him very sleepy. He drowsed and nodded in his corner by the shaking window, rousing himself at intervals to cast a watchful glance at Karen.

She still slept like a worn-out child.

In the west the sun was already level with the car windows—a cherry-hued ball veiled slightly in delicate brown haze. The train had stopped at a siding in a young woodland. He opened the window to the fresh, sweet air and looked out at the yellowing autumn leaves which the setting sun made transparent gold.

It was very still; scarcely a sound except from very high in the air somewhere came a faint clattering noise. And after a while he turned his head and looked up at a flight of aeroplanes crossing the line at an immense height.

Stately, impressive, like a migration of wide-winged hawks, they glided westward, the red sun touching their undersides with rose. And he watched them until they became dots, and disappeared one by one in mid-heaven.

Presently, along the main track, came rushing a hospital train, the carriages succeeding one another like flashes of light, vanishing into perspective with a diminishing roar and leaving in its wake an odour of disinfectants.

Then the train he was on began to move; soldiers along the rails stood at attention; a company of Uhlans cantered along a parallel road, keeping pace with the cars for a while. Then the woods closed in again, thick,

shaggy forest land which blotted out the low-hanging sun.

He closed the window, turned and glanced at Karen. She slept. And he lay back in his corner and closed his haggard eyes.

The next time he opened them the light in the car had become very dim.

Twilight purpled the woods and hills; dusk was arriving swiftly.

It was dark when, at a way station, a soldier opened the door, saluted, and lighted the lamp in the compartment. The train lay there a long while; they were unloading horses, cannon and waggons; teams were being harnessed in the dark, guns limbered, cannoniers mounted, all in perfect order and with a quiet celerity and an absence of noise and confusion that fascinated Guild.

Presently, and within a space of time almost incredible, the artillery moved off into the darkness. He could hear the rhythmical tramp.e of horses, the crunch of wheels, sabres rattling, the subdued clank and clatter of a field battery on the march. But he could see no lights, distinguish no loud voices, no bugle-calls. Now and then a clear whistle note sounded; now and then a horse snorted, excited by the open air.

The car in which they were was now detached and sidetracked; the long train backed slowly past and away into the darkness.

And after a while another locomotive came steaming out of the obscurity ahead; he heard them coupling

it to the car in which he sat. The jar did not awaken Karen.

Presently they were in motion again; the tiled roof of an unlighted railway station glided past the window; stars appeared, trees, a high dark hill to the right.

A military guard came through the corridor, lantern in hand, and told Guild that the car was now entirely empty and at his disposal.

So he rose and went forward where he could look out ahead and see the dull glow of the smokestack and the ruddy light of the furnace.

For a long while he stood there watching the moving silhouettes of engineer and fireman. The sombre red light trembled on the rails and swept the wayside trees or painted with fiery streaks the sides of a cut or glittered along the rocky wet walls of tunnels.

When at last he went back to the compartment, Karen was sitting up, twisting her hair into shape.

"Do you feel rested?" he asked cheerfully, seating himself beside her.

"Yes, thank you. Where are we, Kervyn?"

"I don't know."

She was still busy with her hair, but her eyes remained on him.

"Can I do anything for you? Do you need anything?" he asked.

"I seem to need almost everything!" she protested, "including a bath and a clergyman. Oh, Kervyn, *what* a wedding journey! Is there anything about me that

resembles a bride? And I'm not even that, yet—just a crumpled, soiled, disreputable child!"

"You are absolutely adorable just as you are!"

"No! I am unspeakable. And I want to be attractive to you. I really can be very nice-looking, only you never saw me so——"

"Dearest!"

"I haven't had any clothes since I first met you!" she said excitedly. "You know I can scarcely bear it to have you think of me this way. Will I have time to buy a gown in Antwerp? How long will it take us to marry each other? Because, of course, I shall not let you ride away with your regiment until you are my husband."

She flushed again, and the tears sprang to her eyes. It was plain that her nerves had given way under the long strain.

"Kervyn! Only yesterday war meant almost nothing to me. And look at me now!—look at the girl you saw in England only a few days ago!—a woman today!—a wife tomorrow, please God—and the fear of this war already overwhelming me."

She brushed the starting tears from her eyes; they filled again. She said miserably: "We women all inherit sorrow, it seems, the moment our girlhood leaves us. A few days ago I didn't know what it was to be afraid. Then you came. And with you came friendship. And with friendship came fear—fear for *you!* . . . And then, very swiftly, love came; and my girlhood was gone—gone—like yesterday—leaving me

alone in the world with you and love and war!"

He drew her face against his shoulder:

"This world war is making us all feel a little lonely," he said. "The old familiar world is already changing under our bewildered eyes. It is a totally new era which is dawning; a new people is replacing the inhabitants of earth, born to new thoughts, new ideals, new ambitions.

"I think the old tyranny is already beginning to pass from men's souls and minds; the old folk-ways, the old and out-worn terrors, the tinselled dogmas, the old false standards, the universal dread of that absolute intellectual freedom which alone can make a truly new heaven and a new earth.

"All this is already beginning to pass away in the awful intellectual revelation which this world war is making hour by hour.

"What wonder that we feel the approaching change, the apprehension of that mortal loneliness which must leave us stripped of all that was familiar while the old order passes—vanishes like mist at dawn."

He bent and touched her hand with his lips:

"But there will be a dawn, Karen. Never doubt it, sweet!"

"Shall our children see it—if God is kind to us?" she whispered.

"Yes. If God is very kind, I think that we shall see it, too."

The girl nodded, pressing her cheek against his, her eyes clear and sweetly grave.

He said: "No man ever born, since Christ, has dared to be himself. No woman, either. . . . I think our children will begin to dare."

She mused, wide-eyed, wondering.

"And he who takes up a sword," he said in a low voice, "shall find himself alone like a mad dog in a city street, with every living soul bent upon his extermination.

"Thus will perish emperors and kings. Our children's children shall have heard of them, marvelling that we had lived to see them pass away into the mist of fable."

After a while she lifted her face and looked at him out of wistful eyes:

"Meanwhile *you* fight for them," she said.

"I am of today—a part of the mock mystery and the tarnished tinsel. That grey old man of Austria quarrels with his neighbour of Servia, and calls out four million men to do his murders for him. And an Emperor in white and steel buckles on his winged helmet summons six million more in the name of God.

"That is a tragedy called 'Today.' But it is the last act, Karen. Already while we hold the stage the scene shifters are preparing the drama called 'Tomorrow.'

"Already the last cues are being given; already the company that held the stage is moving slowly toward the eternal wings. The stage is to be swept clean; everything must go, toy swords and cannon, crowns and ermine, the old and battered property god who required a sea of blood and tears to propitiate him; the

old and false idol once worshiped as Honour, and set upon a pedestal of dead bones. All these must go, Karen—are already going. . . . But—I am in the cast of 'Today'; I may only watch them pass, and play my part until the curtain falls."

They remained silent for a long time. The train had been running very slowly. Presently it stopped.

Guild rose and went to the door of the compartment, where a lantern glimmered, held high. Soldiers opened the door; an officer of Guard Cuirassiers saluted.

"We control the line no farther," he said. "Telegraphic orders direct me to send you forward with a flag."

"May I ask where we are?" said Guild.

"Not far from Antwerp. Will you aid Madam to descend? Time presses. We have a motor car at your disposal."

He turned, aided Karen to the wooden platform, which was thronged with heavy cavalrymen, then lifted out their luggage, which a soldier in fatigue cap took.

"There was also a box," said Guild to the officer of Cuirassiers.

"It is already in the tonneau." He drew a telegram from his pocket and handed it to Guild, and the young man read it under the flickering lantern light:

> Captain the Comte d'Yvoir:
>
> I am told that I shall recover. It has been, so far, between us, only the sword; but I trust, one day, it shall be the hand. Luck was against me. Not your fault.

I send to you and to my daughter my respect and my good will. Until a more auspicious day, then, and without rancour.

Your friend the enemy,

VON REITER, Maj.-Gen'l.

Karen, reading over his shoulder, pressed his arm convulsively. Tears filled her eyes, but she was smiling.

"May we send a wire?" asked Guild of the officer.

An orderly came with pencil and telegraph blank. Guild wrote:

We are happy to learn that you are to recover. Gratitude, respect, salute from me; from her, gratitude and love. It will always be the hand. May the auspicious day come quickly.

GUELDRES, Capt. Reserve.

The orderly took the blank; Guild returned the salute of the Cuirassier and followed the soldier who was carrying their luggage.

An automobile stood there, garnished with two white lanterns and a pair of white flags.

A moment later they were speeding through the darkness out across a vast dim plain.

An officer sat in the front seat beside a military chauffeur; behind them, on a rumble, was seated a cavalryman.

In a few minutes the first challenge came; they stopped; helmeted figures clustered around them, a few words were whispered, then on they rolled, slowly, until

there came another challenge, another delay; and others followed in succession as the tall phantoms of Uhlans loomed up around them in the night.

Two of these lancers wheeled and accompanied the automobile at a canter. One of the riders was a trumpeter; and very soon the car halted and the Uhlan set his trumpet to his lips and sounded it.

Almost immediately a distant bugle answered. The cavalryman on the rumble stood up, hung one of the lanterns to a white flag, and waved it slowly to and fro. Then the mounted Uhlan tied the flag to his lance-tip, hung the lantern to it, and raised it high in the air. Already the chauffeur had piled their luggage by the roadside; the officer got out, came around, and opened the door. As Karen descended he gave her his arm, then saluted and sprang to his place. The car backed in a half circle, turned, backed again, swung clear around, and went humming away into the darkness.

From the shadowy obscurity ahead came the trample of horses.

"Halt! Who goes there?" cried the mounted lancer.

"Parlementaire with a flag!"

The Uhlan trumpeter sounded the parley again, then, reversing his trumpet, reined in and sat like a statue, as half a dozen cloaked riders walked their horses up under the rays of the lantern which dangled from the Uhlan's lifted lance.

A cavalryman wearing a jaunty Belgian forage cap leaned from his saddle and looked earnestly at Guild.

"Who is this, if you please?" he asked curiously.

"Reserve cavalry officer and his wife," said the Uhlan crisply. "Orders are to deliver them to you."

The Belgian lieutenant had already recognized the uniform of the Guides; so had the other cavalrymen; and now they were hastily dismounting and leading their horses forward.

"Karen," said Guild unsteadily, "it's my own regiment!" And he stepped forward and took the lieutenant's hands in both of his. His features were working; he could not speak, but the troopers seemed to understand.

They gave Karen a horse; Guild lifted her to the saddle, shortened the stirrup, and set her sideways.

They offered him another horse, but he shook his head, flung one arm over Karen's saddle and walked on slowly beside her stirrup.

Behind them the clatter of retreating hoofs marked the return of the Uhlans. From somewhere in the darkness a farm cart rumbled up and cavalrymen lifted in their luggage.

Now, under the clustered planets the cart and the troopers moved off over a wide, smooth road across the plain.

And last of all came Karen with Guild on foot beside her.

Her horse stepped slowly, cautiously; her slim hand lay on her lover's shoulder, his arm was around her, and his cheek rested against her knees.

All the world was before them now, with all that it can ever hold for the sons of men—the eternal trinity, inexorable, unchangeable—Death, and Life, and Love.

CHAPTER XXVI

AMICUS DEI

I

Through the April meadows ambling
Where the new born lambs are gamb'ling
Cometh May and vanisheth;—
Cometh lovely June a-rambling;—
July follows out of breath
Scattering the playful swallows;
On her heels a Shepherd follows,
All dolled up like Old Man Death.

II

While he capers, pipes, and prances,
Meadows wither where he dances;
Suddenly the sunshine ends!
Shrinking from his grinning glances,
Every blossom wilts and bends.
Spectral forests rise and tower,
Bursting into crimson flower,
And an iron rain descends.

III

Shepherd, Shepherd, lithely whirling,
To your screaming pipes a-skirling,

Tell me why you blithely dance?
But the shrilling tempest, hurling
Shrivelled blossoms of Romance,
Answered: "Help! For Christ is dying!"
And I heard the pipes replying:
"Let the Friend of God advance!"

IV

Prince of the Vanguard, armed from head to heel,
And reassuring God amid your bayonets
Where the Imperial standard frets
And the sun sets
Across five million marching acolytes in steel,
Red looms a ruined world against the West,
Red lie its dead beneath your sombre crest,
And redly drips your sword
And the lances of your horde
Where all things died, the loveliest and best.
In this dead land there stirs no pulse, no breath,
For, where you ride, on your right hand rides Death.

V

God's ally, self-ordained to wield His rod,
Trampling His will into the heretics,
Leveling their shrines to heaps of bricks,
How the red stain sticks
To the ten million pair of boots that plod!
Quickly on Him your Iron Cross bestow
That He may wash you whiter than the snow.

VI

Prince of the Vanguard, heed no bleeding clod
Left on the reeking sod among your myrmidons
Where the anathema of your Huns
Hurled from iron guns
Dashes a million frightened souls to God!
Bright shines the promise of the Prince of Peace:
"Sheer you My sheep; garner their fleece,"—
Or was it "feed" He said?
Too late! His sheep are dead.
All things must die, and even Death shall cease.
Then the Almighty on His throne may nod
Unvexed by martyrs importuning God.

THE END